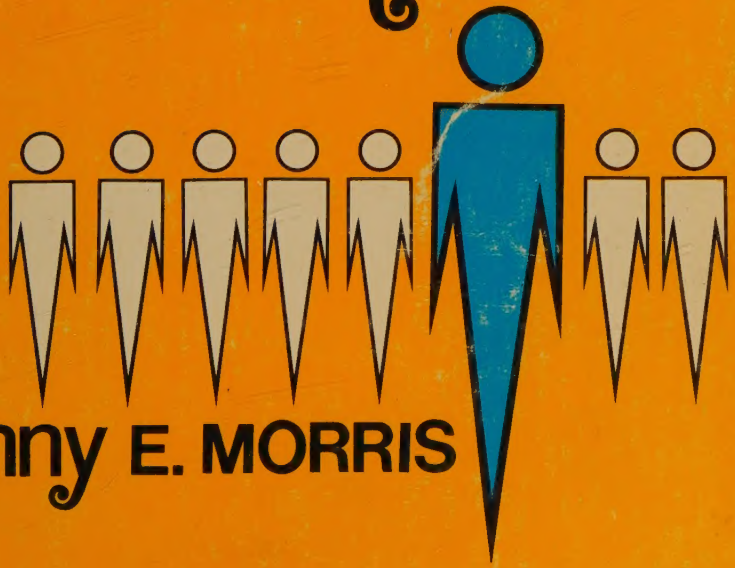
A TRUE STORY!

A LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERS



Danny E. MORRIS

A LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERS

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Danny E. MORRIS

tidings

1908 GRAND AVENUE, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
37203

PUBLISHERS NOTE

Much of this book is written in the first person, much is written with the "we" approach as is some of the New Testament. Some of the short chapters in "The People" section are written by persons whose names must be kept secret, but whose testimony is true. The purpose in writing this book is to tell a story of the life of a church that underwent a renewal experience and to share this experience with others. This is why the authors are calling it "The Autobiography of a Corporate Spiritual Experience" and they have charged their minister with the responsibility of gathering this material and telling it in his and their words.

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DEDICATED TO

THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP

OF

THE JOHN WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH

BECAUSE THEY WERE RECEPTIVE

TO A

GREAT SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

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FOREWORD

The book, *A Life That Really Matters,* is the story of how the program started and what happened to the first 38 people who took part.

The program is sometimes called, "The John Wesley Great Experiment," "The Brave Christian Movement," "A Life That Really Matters," or "WANTED: Ten Brave Christians." All four names refer to the same challenge.

You are encouraged to use the names above, or make adaptations to suit your own local interests. Use any name that will be most helpful to you. One thing we will insist upon:

DO NOT WATER-DOWN THIS CHALLENGE . . .

—By making changes that will take the strength out of the disciplines;

—By doing part of the Experiment, anticipating maximum results;

—By making it convenient for yourself or others;

—Or by "pulling together" a group without proper preparation which challenges people to put God first!

R. L. Johnson of Albany, Georgia says:

". . . I will challenge any man or woman to sit quietly in prayer and meditation at five-thirty a.m. for thirty days and then tell me that he prays but his prayers have no meaning.

". . . I will challenge any man or woman to plan a totally unexpected and unselfish deed daily for thirty days and then tell me he does not love his fellowman.

". . . I will challenge any man or woman to set to writing bit by bit over a period of thirty days at five-thirty a.m., what he expects to make of his life and then tell me he has made no effort to conform to the written design.

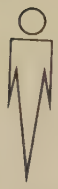
". . . I will challenge anyone to perform the three above functions and then say he does not enjoy sharing his experience with others.

". . . I recommend without qualifications this experiment to anyone who has real concern about himself and his relationship with God. I do not recommend it to anyone who does not have that concern."

We believe it is essential that you accept the challenge in its entirety if you are to benefit fully.

Let us know about your particular method of presentation, the materials you develop and the nature and outgrowth of your group's experience.

Danny E. Morris
Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202



Part 1

THE PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

By Sam E. Teague

John Wesley Methodist Church is located on beautiful Old St. Augustine Road in Florida's Capital City, Tallahassee. Our City is situated in the beautiful rolling hills of northwest Florida in a geographical area once described by Andrew Jackson as "the most beautiful land I have seen in America." In addition to being the capital of Florida, Tallahassee is also the home of Florida State University and Florida A&M University.

John Wesley Methodist Church was organized in May, 1960, with a charter membership of 144. During the first three and one half years of the life of the church, services were held in the auditorium of a public school. In 1964, a new church plant was begun, initial construction consisting of classrooms and a Fellowship Hall with seating capacity of 300. Another wing to the main building is contemplated for early 1966.

The present membership of the church is 440. The majority of the members are in the "middle-income" group as they are typically employed by some form of state or local government, or other types of organizational employment. The church experiences a somewhat high rate of turn-over in its membership due to transfers in employment, particularly in the 25-45 age groups.

The initial impetus for The Great Experiment described in this book was among young adults, age 21-35. From this group it spread throughout the church.

I. IN HISTORY

The John Wesley - Great Experiment

The program of "The Ten Brave Christians" came as an answer to prayer. The prayer was prayed by Sam Teague of Tallahassee, Florida. For more than two years he had been teacher for the Christian Home Builders Class (Young Adults, 35 years of age and under) of John Wesley Methodist Church.

On Sunday morning, January 24, 1965, he was reviewing his Sunday School lesson for the day. For many weeks scores of young adults had been coming to hear him talk about "How to Build a Life That Matters." They came, they listened, and they went away again . . . and again . . . and again!

On that Sunday morning he thought about the fifty or more young adults to whom he would be speaking, and suddenly he felt "empty inside." When will they ever come to *life?* How can the great spiritual power that is in every one of them ever be released?

With his head on his desk and feeling very discouraged, he prayed, "O, God, show me how to challenge these young people so they can have a life that matters."

And abruptly he sat up . . . as startled as if someone had called his name. He began writing—excitedly and at a furious pace. The thoughts were more rapid than the pen. And for 20 exciting minutes the answer to his 15-second prayer continued to come, accompanied by chill-bumps on his arms. He had the awesome sense of being used by God for a great purpose.

The program of "The Ten Brave Christians," as you have it before you, is as it was written in those moments of inspiration. When he put what was to be the final period

in its place there was nothing more to write—the inspiration turned off as dramatically as it had turned on! As he wrote it then, you have it before you today. To this spiritual discipline nothing has been added; nothing taken away.

The spiritual discipline involves a serious effort of Bible study, prayer and meditation, service to the church, self-sacrifice, and a Christian concern for others.

A gift from God? We all ask, "What else could it be?" One of the members of the group said, "That is the genius of The Great Experiment. To come into a personal encounter with Christ no part of it can be left out—and at present nothing more is needed."

It is altogether appropriate to share this gift under the banner, "THE JOHN WESLEY—GREAT EXPERIMENT," because it was conceived in the heart of a layman of our church. It grew out of the need of PEOPLE in our Christian Home-Builders Class. The John Wesley Church was receptive to a spiritual experience. But more than these, like Mr. Wesley's inspiration, it was a *Gift from God—An Answer to Prayer.*

In the last week of March we were reminded that a spiritual discipline was involved in Mr. Wesley's organization of the Methodist societies. I, as minister of the John Wesley Church, was preacher for a week of revival services at Northeast Methodist Church, Tampa, where the Reverend John Davenport is minister. It was he who laid his finger against the following excerpts from the writings of John Wesley. Writing in 1748, Mr. Wesley set out to give "A Plain Account of The People Called Methodists."

> **"About ten years ago my brother and I were desired to preach in many parts of London. We had no view therein, but so far as we were able . . . to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was and to persuade them to embrace it.**
>
> **"One, and another, and another came to us, asking, what they should do, being distressed on every side; as every one strove to weaken and none to strengthen their hands in God. We**

advised them, 'strengthen you one another. Talk together as often as you can. And pray earnestly with and for one another, that you may endure to the end and be saved.'

"They said, 'But we want you likewise to talk with us often, to direct and quicken us in our way, to give us the advices which you well know we need, and to pray with us as well as for us' . . . so I told them, 'If you will all of you come together every Thursday, in the evening, I will gladly spend some time with you in prayer and give you the best advice I can.'

"Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterward called A Society; a very innocent name, and very common in London, for any number of people associated themselves together.

"The thing proposed in their associating themselves together was obvious to everyone. They wanted to 'flee from the wrath to come,' and to assist each other in so doing. They therefore united themselves 'in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation'."

Thus about 225 years ago John Wesley discovered the genius of small groups meeting together regularly to pray, to study the Scriptures, and to witness. He found that a spiritual discipline helped prepare people to experience God's presence.

We of John Wesley Church were misty-eyed when we realized that the program of "The Ten Brave Christians" has about it the markings of Mr. Wesley's early Methodist Societies. It was a spiritual discipline which was the strength of Methodism in its beginning. And it was a spiritual discipline, again in our day, that prepared the way for a breakthrough of the Holy Spirit in the life of a small fellowship named John Wesley Methodist Church. The parallel was most striking and provocative.

It was only after The Great Experiment (as we at times refer to it) had begun to affect profoundly the spiritual life of our fellowship that we began to appreciate other uncanny parallels between Mr. Wesley's ministerial and spiritual career and this little church named for him. For example, it was in May of 1738 that he felt his "heart strangely warmed."

Since we had named our church for him, we went to

considerable effort to have the number "1738" mark the address of John Wesley Church. Encouraged by this success, we looked for other "novelties." And with some maneuvering, we incorporated the same date in the church's telephone number—877-1738: and, the minister's auto tag—13W-1738.

But in the light of what has happened, we have taken another look at these "novelties." The circle is complete. It is curiously interesting that the number that marked the year of Mr. Wesley's conversion experience belongs to a namesake church that has had its heart "strangely warmed" through a spiritual discipline which came as an answer to prayer.

Another parallel: One of the most remembered moments in the childhood days of Mr. Wesley was his dramatic rescue from the burning Epworth parsonage. He was likened unto a "brand plucked from the burning." His father was certain that young John had been spared for a great purpose; surely he fulfilled that purpose!

At the risk of sounding presumptuous, it is fair to say that this church came into being with an uncanny sense of mission in its spirit. Early in the life of the church a layman coined the phrase: "Giving until it helps." The spirit of these words expressed the character of this fellowship. And our people have never lost the sense of being a church born for some great purpose—that purpose we have never known 'til now!

We pick up the golden thread of similarity again as we recall that Mr. Wesley's spiritual experience did not arrive full-grown in a single instant. Rather it "evolved" over a period of years and was the result of many influences. His was an experience in concert with the past.

A prime example is that the home of Susanna and Samuel Wesley was a significant part of their son's preparation for

spiritual rebirth. Susanna Wesley started each of her children on their formal education as they became five years old.

The thread is for us, even more golden at this point, when we recall that Trinity Church of Tallahassee was not only the mother-church of Florida Methodism, back in 1844, but more recently, along with St. Paul Methodist, was the mother of John Wesley Church—almost exactly five years ago.

Across the years thousands of "Brave Christians" have moved through the fellowship of Trinity and St. Paul Churches. And now their offspring, young John Wesley Church—at five years of age—is ready to be "schooled" in the workings of the Holy Spirit.

We hold one end of this golden thread in our hand to remind us that we would be shamefully shortsighted if we look upon what has happened in recent months as divorced from what has happened in the past five years.

Council Hardin wrote, "Faith is belief in things unseen, but deeply felt." Almost five years ago a small group of "Brave Christians" had a belief that was deeply felt and they put their faith to work to organize a church. The church they helped to found, they have helped to nurture. The loyalty and love, the service and sacrifice, and their spirit formed a fellowship which attracted others across these years. And together we have worshiped and worked, we prayed and persevered. And it was such a fellowship—always struggling, and often unsuccessful—that provided the setting for God to perform a mighty act.

How far the thread of similarity runs we have not yet learned. But these few parallels have been mentioned to suggest some reason for the increased reverence with which we look upon what has happened among us. It has occurred to us that there must have been some higher design in the

choice of the name "Christian Home-Builders" for the Young Adult Class in our church. For now the circle is complete again. We have discovered God's gift of a spiritual discipline that is at least one of the secrets of "Christian Home-Building."

Why not call it "THE JOHN WESLEY—GREAT EXPERIMENT"—it fits! Mr. Wesley was certainly one of the "Brave Christians" of the world who dared himself to try a heavenly discipline. And what he tried worked then, but what is even more important now, the heavenly discipline of "The Ten Brave Christians" works today.

And how many times in these more than 200 years has the church been called to "return"? To recover the sort of spiritual discipline strong enough to give a man of small physical stature a heart big enough for the whole world? A spiritual discipline that was strong enough to give to the world—to life itself—a heart big enough for men!

This spiritual discipline came to life in the heart of a small church, and we must share the seed of faith and experience with the whole wide world!

This is "THE JOHN WESLEY—GREAT EXPERIMENT," as it came in answer to the prayer of Sam Teague, on January 24, 1965:

FOR ONE MONTH
WANTED: TEN BRAVE CHRISTIANS

1. **Who will meet once each week to pray together.**
2. **Who will give two hours time each week to our church (self-surrender).**
3. **Who will give God 1/10 of earnings during this month (self-sacrifice).**
4. **Who will spend 5:30-6:00 each morning in prayer and meditation (self-control).**
5. **Who will witness for God their experience to others.**

We know it works today! In the month of March, twenty-two persons in our church tried this spiritual discipline and

it changed their lives. In April, another sixteen persons tried it and their lives were changed. It has changed the life of our church. It has changed the life of the minister of the church. We know it works!

One member of the group of "Ten Brave Christians" is a produce merchant. He said, "I don't understand all I know about The Great Experiment. But I know it works! For the first time in my thirty years, I have God in my life. *I know it works!*

II. OUT OF NEED

A Life That Really Matters

Do you want to be happy . . REALLY HAPPY? You can be! But happiness doesn't come out of the blue. There is a secret to the happy life. Hannah Whitall Smith wrote a spiritual classic entitled, *"The Christian's Secret of A Happy Life."* This book helped me find the happy life. I shall ever be debtor to her spiritual insight which helped refine the thoughts which are expressed herein. There is a secret to the happy life. Because I have recently found happiness for myself, I want to share the secret. Everything about it has been a surprise. How to find happiness may come as a surprise to you as it did to me.

First, I was surprised to know that there was possible such happiness. Another surprise was the shallowness of the happiness I thought I had. But a greater surprise came when I learned how happiness comes. *It can never be found by those who try to find it.*

Have you been out looking for happiness? I ask you, where is the gladness that takes your breath away? Where is the joy that is like music to the soul? Where is the peace that the world cannot touch?

If you have been out looking for happiness, you can't tell me about finding it. Rather, you tell me of an emptiness like which comes at the end of a fruitless search. You tell me of a thirst . . . a hunger! You describe a starving . . . a dying feeling! You tell me this and I know how you feel, because I too, know what it is like to have the heart sunk low!

But the greatest surprise of all was to learn how happiness comes. I want everybody to learn it. But before we can, one fact must be fixed in our minds: *Happiness can never be found by those who try to find it.* There is no need to proceed until this is securely in mind.

We are now ready for the greatest surprise of all:

God's plan for us is not necessarily that we be happy, but that we have a life that matters. As I have experienced it, that is the secret of the happy life. God does not require success. He only demands faithful obedience.

How does one build a life that matters? Consider our Master as He talked with Mary and Martha. He was a guest in their home. Mary had settled at her Lord's feet and was listening intently to His every word. Martha burst in: "Lord, don't you mind that my sister has left me to do everything by myself? Tell her to get up and help me!" But the Master said, "Martha, my dear, you are worried and bothered about providing so many things. Only a few things are really needed, perhaps only one."

"Only a few things are really needed . . ." In the few words of our Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us how to pray for the only things we really need. But He said, ". . . perhaps only one . . ." thing is needed. And He included that also.

The one thing really needed for life to matter is *"Thy Will Be Done."* Unless we can pray that part of our Lord's

Prayer, nothing in life will ever matter. "Thy Will Be Done." For obedience and surrender are the secrets.

I am confident that it is God's plan for us to have a life that matters. Such a life can be built only as we are committed to doing God's will through our lives.

Can we pray—not just say, but pray—"Thy Will Be Done Upon Earth . . ." and through "my life"? Until we can, we will never live a life that matters! This almost overlooked teaching of Jesus seems to many in our day a strange and unreal philosophy of life.

When the Christian Home-Builders Class began considering this concept, it was almost totally beyond their grasp. But after two or three sessions they began to understand that the teachings of modern day culture and society mislead them. Christians throughout the world have more and more in the way of material possessions. (They could use themselves as examples.) Then suddenly they realized that these same Christians (themselves included) had less and less of the things that make life really worthwhile.

". . . A Life That Matters . . ." Was this what Jesus meant when He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth:" "The light of the world"? He mentioned leaven in bread, going the second mile, being a good Samaritan, giving one's cloak, and loving one's enemies.

They began to think seriously about this concept that perhaps the purpose of life is not necessarily to be happy, but to build a life that matters. They began to ask the question, "How do I build such a life?"

The teacher of the class felt that no one could build a life that matters unless that person came to "love God with all his heart and all his mind and all his soul and all his strength." But how to get the class members to grasp this was a difficult undertaking! Never in their entire lives, in all their experiences of organized religion, had they been

asked to give their lives to Christ when it meant doing something tangible to bring about total surrender to God.

During the first several class sessions there was reluctance to even talk about "surrendering your lives to God." Nearly everyone felt that to surrender would require him to do something strange, mysterious, and unusual. The teacher did not lessen the fears. Rather, he told them that not one of them could know the great power that God could release in their lives unless first, they "sought Him with all their hearts." One way to do this was through The Great Experiment.

The class was told that this program of "The Ten Brave Christians" would especially welcome those who were discouraged and had nowhere else to turn; those who were afraid and had nowhere else to hide; those who were disappointed after having tried everything else; those who were lonely and wanted once again (or for the first time) to feel the great surge of God's love and power in their lives.

By this time, most of the class members had begun to realize that building "a life that matters" would require a substantial effort on their part . . . that it was not going to be a gift dropped in their laps from God. And then the realization came that everyone would be faced with a decision; some would decide to try and build a life that matters, and others would decide to be "content" with their lives as they were.

The class lessons began to bear down hard on the "HOW" of building a life that matters. Sunday after Sunday the class was challenged to face up to *what really matters in life.* This confrontation began to have a profound effect upon the attitude of the majority of the Christian Home-Builders. Examples:

1. It was generally agreed that Jesus was dealing with

this same subject when He said, "Ye are the light of the world . . . Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick so that it may give off light;" and "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its savor of what good is it;" and "Store not up treasures on earth but store up treasures in Heaven." Many members of the class began to reassess their lives. To an extent, this was a miracle in itself.

2. Small effort had been made by the class in the two and one half years of its life to exert any positive influence in the life of the church. Now, suddenly the class began to awaken like some long-sleeping giant which was beginning to stir.

3. A noticeable change came over the class members as the realization slowly sank in that every person would be forced to make a decision . . . either *for* God, or to sit this opportunity out again as most of them had been doing for a lifetime.

After the fourth Sunday of extreme interest and some anxiety on the part of the class, the teacher opened the fifth lesson by saying "You are just wasting your time unless you are ready to surrender your life to God totally. No halfway measures will do this time. You must be ready to go all the way . . . you must be ready to practice (1) self-surrender, (2) self-denial, (3) self-discipline, and (4) self-sacrifice.

"If you really want to build a life that matters, this is the time and this is the place to begin . . ."

He then explained the program of "Ten Brave Christians," hoping that there would be at least ten members of the class who, having tried everything else and found all wanting, would be willing to give their lives to God totally for one month. There was no question in the teacher's mind that if a small group would let God take over their lives

for one month, it would cause a spiritual revolution within the church.

III. THROUGH DISCIPLINE

And He Shall Direct Thy Path

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians, who for one month will do the following five things . . ." As I want these to come alive for you, I am going to describe them in some detail, because if they stagger your imagination like they did mine when I first read them, you are not prepared to consider them.

Let me begin by saying that The Great Experiment is only a beginning. Once more, *The Great Experiment is only a beginning!*

1.

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians who will meet once each week to pray together." Our group meets on Tuesday evening. We had planned to keep the meetings to an hour. For our first meeting, we succeeded in doing this. The second meeting lasted an hour and a quarter. The third meeting lasted two hours. And so it has gone!

The group meetings have been irreplaceable for they provide a setting for sharing and praying together. Because we were all seeking to be loved, perhaps it was possible for us to be more loving.

We noticed immediately that something happens when people get together and pray together. We could share our experiences—whether they were high moments or low—and the other members of the group accepted us. We were not afraid to confess our weaknesses and doubts—even our sins—for we were a fellowship of love where each one was

accepted. And it was through this acceptance and love that many, who had not known acceptance and love before, came to new life.

You can't meet with people and pray with them and share your experiences without wanting to reach out and put your arms around them, because there is a bond of love that unites you. It changes your life.

The first two meetings we were a bit timid and we didn't dare pray aloud. We were not ready yet. We had silent prayers. But spontaneously at the third and subsequent meetings the members have prayed some of the most magnificent prayers I have ever heard because they were prayers of Christian conviction.

We meet once a week in a suitable place to pray together, to share experiences, and to exchange good books. We picked some books that deal with God, and our relationship to Him in prayer, in Christian experience and commitment, and love. Every person was encouraged to take a book to read each week, then bring it back to share with someone else. Several members of the group said they had no such books in their home. Some were surprised that books on such subjects were available. Part of the reason we don't have an intelligent faith is that we don't read enough intelligent faith books.

Reading one book a week for four weeks is not a lot of reading. It is just a beginning, but it is quite a beginning. Many of the people which have undergone such dynamic Christian conversions have been helped by the books they have read during the month of spiritual discipline.

2.

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians who will give two hours' time each week to our church." The needs of the church are many. We suggested several needs, a few of which could be done with one's hands. But most of the

needs which we suggested involved interpersonal relations —opportunities for sharing experiences and witnessing for Christ.

Our people were amazed at how little the church was doing. They began going into the hospital, visiting shutins, canvassing their block for new residents, or visiting to get acquainted with members of our church who lived in their neighborhood whom they did not know. They came to me over and again asking: "Who has been doing all of this?" When I could not readily answer, they would say: "What a shame!" "What a shame! It is a tragedy!" Many of them realized for the first time the church needed their time and effort.

We were asked to give just two hours. We were amazed at the results of the two hours given by even 22 people each week—later the number of people grew to 38. Some of the most refreshing moments of the month came as dedicated people began calling, asking: "Whom can I visit?" "What can I do?" "When do you need me?"

For example: We had only eleven faithful members of the choir. They were discouraged. We had found no way to increase their number. But during the month of March the choir grew to more than twice the size.

Again, getting Sunday School teachers had long been a problem. We were desperate! We couldn't even staff the classes we had, to say nothing of growing. Within a few weeks we had one teacher for every 6-8 children—and two teachers we could not place.

Then there was the surprise that came when we called for Vacation Church School teachers. We needed enough teachers and helpers for a school of 100 children. The call was made at an evening class party, and within five minutes after the meeting closed we had all the volunteers we needed and several extras!

And it brought new life to the church. It brought a new sense of a person's individual responsibility for making the church an instrument of God.

3.

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians who will give God one-tenth of earnings during this month." One man in the church who was concerned about this part of The Great Experiment said, "You know this Ten Brave Christian idea is a pretty good gimmick, but it's timed very poorly."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know the tax cut we got—it "cut" a lot deeper than we thought. And there is Social Security for most people; local taxes, auto tags . . . The month of March is a very poor time for this. There are a lot of demands on people's money. But it's a good gimmick! I don't plan to do it, but if it had been planned for the fall when there wouldn't be so many other demands, I think it would have meant a lot to our church."

On the following Sunday, the last day to join the first group, I gave the call for any who would come forward to commit themselves to undertake the spiritual disciplines. And this man, with tears in his eyes, shook loose from his seat and came to the altar for his commitment. I put my hand in his and said, "God bless you." I knew he had made a religious decision.

In my office one Saturday afternoon, nearly a month later, he said, "I've been a member of several Methodist Churches. I have always loved the church but there's no church I have ever attended that has meant to me what this one has meant."

He said, "I always thought I was a Christian, but I never had a personal relationship with God until this month."

"A gimmick—such a good gimmick!" he had said, But no, he didn't mention that any more.

Give God one-tenth of your earnings for the month.

Certainly it is not easier in November than it is in March. But our people began to see that Christian Tithing is a natural, normal, necessary part of Christian Commitment. Not a single person in this church has raised an argument about giving God a tenth of earnings. This in itself was a surprise, because every time we had previously talked about tithing there had been a veritable groundswell of objection. From nearly every quarter there had come a word of caution: "Oh, you will make people angry if you start talking about tithing." And because of this attitude we found ourselves with a crisis. As of February, 1965, we estimated a projected deficit on our $30,000 annual budget would be $2,500 by the end of May, 1965.

In March we began to seriously consider our responsibility to practice Christian Stewardship and Tithing. The facts are: In March, 22 persons tithed for the month. In April, 16 more persons made the commitment—with most of the March group continuing. And in May, a total of 51 persons (families—out of a total of 185 families) tithed for the month, with many continuing thereafter.

The following figures indicate only the financial significance of such commitment:

Member Contributions (Average, June-Feb.)	**$ 1,910**
Member Contributions (March, 1965)	**$ 2,074**
Member Contributions (April, 1965)	**$ 2,385**
Member Contributions (May, 1965)	**$ 4,359**
Total Raised All Sources June-Feb.	**$20,457**
Total Raised All Sources March-May	**$12,862**
Average Total Per Month Raised All Sources for Nine Months: June-Feb.	**$ 2,283**
Average Total Per Month Raised All Sources for Three Months: March-May	**$ 4,287**

We soon lost sight of our projected deficit of $2,500. We closed out the year at the end of May with an overpayment of $3,410 in excess of our $30,000 annual budget.

The change came when our people realized that until we get all our relationships to God in order like they are supposed to be—putting first things first—nothing else in life works out.

One of the most important things in our life is our money. We spend all of our waking hours, and many of our sleepless nights, worrying about how we are going to make enough money, and worrying about how to keep from spending too much money. Our whole life is, in a sense, centered upon this great struggle.

God does not necessarily ask us to sell our homes or give up our jobs. He does not say: "Take your child up on the mountain and sacrifice him upon the altar." But God does say to us, "Return to me one-tenth of your earnings," "the tithe is the Lord's."

About two weeks before The Great Experiment began in our church, I underwent a conversion experience all over again—and in my own church. Until that Sunday night I could not have spoken so emphatically on the importance of Christian Tithing, because I didn't wholeheartedly believe in it. I couldn't see how important it was. I had tithed for a long time, but I did it out of a sense of duty; not out of a sense of love. I did it because as the spiritual leader of the church I thought I ought to do it, but I begrudged it much of the time. But finally, I got my life straightened out. I determined in my own will that I was going to put God first, even in the gift of money, which to me is one of the most important things I have. When I made that commitment in love, the experience of God came into my life and changed it. My people began saying they had a new preacher.

Now there is no need for you to deceive yourself as I had been doing. Until you put God first in your life, nothing else is going to fall into place. If you don't believe this, keep up your deception. But as long as you do, you will never have "a life that REALLY matters."

Now this doesn't say that you must sign up to spend the rest of your life tithing. This says the challenge is to try The Great Experiment of Christian Tithing. Try it! What have you got to lose? (I started to say this is a "thirty-day free home trial.") But it is a thirty-day home trial to see if you are willing to say to God, "God, here am I. Here is all I am, and all I have." If you are not willing to put God first, nothing will fall into place.

I think it is the same way with a local church. Until we get some concept of the ministry of Christ in the world, and until we put our funds into that ministry so that it ministers not to our own needs only, but the needs of a suffering humanity, I believe nothing in the church will ultimately fall into place. And our church believes this is true.

On April 13, 1965 the Commission on Stewardship and Finance prepared the following fiscal policy:

> **"A serious contemplation of a Christian life involves supplication to God through the tithes of the individual. Since the congregation is being challenged to make a commitment to God, it is the considered opinion of the Commission that the church should also place God first in the use of its money. It is urgently recommended that the fiscal policy of the church be established to pay the churches tithes to God, our "Gifts to Others" prior to the payment of any other commitments. Disbursement of these funds would be on a monthly pro-rata basis similar to other budgetary items."**

The Official Board approved the recommendation not only unanimously, but enthusiastically!

Put God first! Dare to try it for a month and I predict that you will have a blessing much greater than ten percent of your earnings, regardless of what you make.

One young man who did not join the first group of "Ten Brave Christians" heard some of the experiences related by members of the first group. He was impressed with the profound conversion of one young woman in particular. After the sharing period, he said to the teacher of the class: "I didn't join the first group because I didn't see how I could spare $70.00, which would have been my tithe for the month. But after hearing her speak and seeing the radiance on her face, I would gladly give $70,00 a month for what she has found."

I could not financially afford to tithe, and I doubt if there is one in a hundred persons who makes enough money to be able to "afford to tithe." But here is the great secret of this matter of tithing as I have experienced it so far. I took my tithe out first as an act of faith. And I prayed to God to help me spend wisely the other nine-tenths of my income. And that was the secret. I didn't have any more money now than I did then but I'll tell you this: I am spending a lot less money. Because money has become important in a far different way than it has ever been before. For the first time in my life I use my money—my money doesn't use me.

4.

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians who will spend 5:30-6:00 o'clock each morning in prayer and meditation." This part of the discipline separates the men from the boys. I frankly admit that I practiced two weeks before the Month of March began, to see if I could get up at 5:30 in the morning . . . and stay up. I practiced for two weeks and I told my people I was practicing, because I had very serious doubts.

I didn't really know why it was so important to get up early. I read an excerpt printed on the bulletin of Trinity Methodist Church, Tallahassee, and it led me to deeper understanding.

It was written by William Law in his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.* (This Christian classic was one of the great motivating forces in the life of John Wesley as he conceived in his own heart the discipline of the Methodist Societies.) Here is what William Law wrote about the place of devotion in a person's daily life:

> **"If you consider devotion only as a time of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence, but if you consider it as a state of the heart, as a lively fervour of the soul, that is deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desires the Spirit of God more than all things in the world: you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together. Mortification of all kinds is the very life of piety; but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have no reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ. What conquest has he got over himself; what right hand has he cut off; what trials is he prepared for; what sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself as to rise to prayer at such time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour?"**

Has there been any discipline in your religious life which has so reached down and shaken your soul?

Getting up at 5:30 in the morning I assure you is one of the grandest experiences that you could ever know. And that is a remarkable statement coming from one who loves sleep as much as I.

There is something about getting your day started with God that changes the complexion of the entire day. Things just don't go the same.

One of the reasons for this is the schedule for the half-

hour period between 5:30 and 6:00 o'clock each morning of the month.

From 5:30-5:40: "Read the scripture for the day . . ." (A verse, not more than five verses on any day had been selected, and every person in the group reads the same selection on the same day in their homes.) ". . . pray about it and meditate upon the scripture. Write out in less than 50 words how this passage of scripture applies to your life."

From 5:40-5:50: "Write out one totally unselfish and unexpected act of kindness of generosity you will do today. Name the person—then act during the day, vigorously and with love and compassion. Keep a written record of the (1) reaction of the person toward whom the kindness is extended and (2) the effect of this act upon you personally."

I hesitate but a moment to point to a great surprise: This was the most difficult part of The Great Experiment—for us. We learned that we are so selfish, so self-centered, so concerned about ourselves—or however you would say it—that it is painfully difficult, but not impossible, to reverse the trend and be involved in the need of someone else, unselfishly.

On the first day of the Month of March when I tried this I spent one hour and 15 minutes by the morning clock trying to figure out something I could do for someone else that would not benefit me personally.

I found I had to look more carefully at the "generous impulses" I might choose to perform. Those words "totally unselfish" and "unexpected act of kindness" began haunting me. Every day I kept coming back to a searching question: Am I performing this particular "act of kindness" because I see a need in the life of someone else, or because there is a hidden need in my own life?

—A need to be needed?

—A need to be (or appear) helpful?
—A need to be loved by others?
—A need to demonstrate my sacrifice?
—A need to seem superior?
—A need to be accounted dependable?

Always these were sobering questions! We had not long practiced this simple exercise before we realized we must reevaluate our motive. Do we give flowers to have the receiver marvel at the fruits of our knowledge and labor; or because they will bring pleasure to the person who loves beautiful things? Do we visit a friend in the hospital because he tells us our visit makes him "feel better" (a boost to our ego) or do we visit because of our human concern? Would we still go even if we knew he were unconscious and unable to respond? Do we knock ourselves out working in the church to prove something to others, or perhaps ourselves, rather than to serve our Lord? Are we proud of our hardships? Do we NEED to be known as a sacrificer?

When there is a residue of goodness that sloshes over the rim of the "cup of cold water given in my name" we are delighted. But the overflow is not a valid motive for offering the cup.

In the light of this, we must "reject" all the "good deeds" that USE the recipient to satisfy the needs of the doer. He is a slave whose acts of kindness are chained to his own needs!

From 5:50-6:00: "Write out carefully how you would like to build and develop your life." Not just today or this month, but for the course of the next 20 or 50 years. In 1985 or 2015, when you look back to 1965, what do you want to have characterized your life?

One cannot do this exercise long without reaching for a pencil with an eraser. Because it suddenly becomes apparent that many of the things you thought were so

important don't really matter at all. It is quite a sobering experience!

". . . go into great detail; take your time. Be thoughtful and prayerful. One well prayed out thought or sentence a day would be excellent progress." I suspect that one "well prayed out thought or sentence a day" is far more progress than most of us make as it is.

This time from 5:30-6:00 o'clock can be the greatest time of your life. It is for me. Things go different when I start my day with God.

5.

"WANTED: Ten Brave Christians who will witness for God their experience to others." The call to witness is one of the most frightening challenges of The Great Experiment. We discovered that we are afraid to witness only because we have nothing to witness about. Or, say it this way: when we have had a Christian Experience, we are joyously eager to witness—to tell the whole world about it.

One of the most thrilling answers to the call to witness came as I suggested that two of our members might want to call long distance and tell someone about their experience. Since I was to be the preacher for a week in Tampa, I asked the minister of the church to send me two or three names of ourstanding laymen. He sent an even dozen names.

As I began to inquire about the interest of our members to call—hoping I could find two or three—I found more requests for names than I had names to be called.

Some of the richest experiences of the month came as our people called a dozen families in the Tampa Church to tell them they were praying about the revival, sharing their experiences in Christ and encouraging them to try The Great Experiment, themselves.

Even across the 250 miles of telephone line, there was a bond of Christian fellowship uniting the caller and the

called. So close was this bond, that five members of our group drove the 500 miles round-trip to be in an evening service of the revival and to share their witness for God and Christ. Their vital witness made a rich impact upon those to whom they spoke.

There are so many ways to witness. A woman talked to me in my office one Thursday night and said, "This is the only thing that frightens me. I don't know if I can witness." Then I explained to her that it became altogether natural when one has something to witness about.

You have just read the program of "The Ten Brave Christians." Or at least, this is part of what is involved. It is a spiritual discipline. It is not something with which to play games. If you want God in your life, you can have God in your life. *God will come into your life through your Christian commitment—your total surrender to God.*

Now there is nothing magical about this, nor mysterious —in the common sense of the word. This spiritual discipline does not involve sooth-sayers, nor fortune tellers, nor seances. It is very practical, down-to-earth living of the Christian faith in your daily life.

You can do it. No matter the type of job you do; the kind of home you live in; nor the kind of background you have, you can do it!

Remember it is deeply spiritual. You cannot read the scripture every day and apply it to your life without it changing your life. You cannot pray to God every morning as you begin your day, without God hearing your prayer and touching your life. It is very practical . . . deeply spiritual . . . and extremely personal!

What happens outside of us is not the really important thing, although it has revolutionized our church. But the important thing is what happens to the person inside. For when you find that you mean more to God, everybody else

means more to you. When you find that everybody else means more to you then you learn that you mean more to God. It is deeply personal.

Finally, I say the program is disarmingly reasonable!

To say it is practical, spiritual, personal, and reasonable is not to make unnecessary a few words of caution. Before you commit yourself to such a spiritual discipline:

First you ought to pray about this earnestly. Not everyone among us should try The Great Experiment immediately. Some of us must shape-up our lives. Some of us must get prepared. You ought to pray about it!

The second thing you must do is to decide if you want your life changed! I give you this as a warning because this spiritual discipline will change your very life. If you do not want your life changed, then this is not for you. If you are satisfied with your life, it is your life. I say blessings on you!

And then a third thing must be considered: If you are not willing to do this, *what are you willing to do?*

A woman came from the choir with tears in her eyes and stood before the altar. Afterwards she came to me and said, "When you asked that question this morning—if you are not willing to do this, what are you willing to do?—I knew I had to join the group. The kind of church member I have been makes a joke of it. I realized that I either had to get serious about my religion, or I had to get out of the church." (Perhaps we have all had that feeling about ourselves!)

So she joined the group and she has had one of the most dramatic and moving Christian conversions I have ever witnessed.

Her sister called and said with tears in her voice: "Such a change has come over my sister, I don't even know how

to talk to her. Can you send me something to help me find what she has found?"

"The purpose of life is not necessarily to be happy, but to have a life that matters." As we have come to experience, "A Life That Matters" begins with the total surrender of one's life to God. And a life that matters, "REALLY MATTERS" when we let God temper it through a spiritual discipline.

Part 2

THE PREACHING

INTRODUCTION

The Place of Surrender

To have "A Life That REALLY Matters," SURRENDER of one's life to God through Christ is basic and indispensable. Even when our Lord said simply "come unto Me" He was calling for the total commitment of one's life. When He said "take up your cross and follow Me," He meant nothing less than total, personal SURRENDER! It is not possible to "take up one's cross" without first totally surrendering one's life to God through Christ.

With this basic truth self-evident, it then follows that one cannot fully enter into a spiritual discipline like The Great Experiment without SURRENDER. Part II is an attempt to underscore the indispensable role of ultimate SURRENDER in The Great Experiment as interpreted through "The Preaching."

I. SURRENDER TO GOD

We Have Played the Fool

My life took a turn one Sunday night in February. I saw no visions, I heard no sirens nor bells. But it was a moving experience in which I came to grips with God's claim upon my life and it opened for me a new dimension of Christian experience.

I shall always remember that Sunday in February. We had a guest preacher both morning and evening. At the

morning service a young woman came to the altar and answered the call of Christ by recommitting her life to Him. The drama of that moment was so precious it melted the congregation. Almost everyone present felt the impact of her decision and commitment. I felt moved to say, "We now have one brave Christian—we need nine more!" There was scarcely a dry eye in the congregation. That was one of the tenderest moments of the year—and a preview of things to come.

At the evening service I was sitting in the congregation. Our visiting preacher talked about stewardship and commitment and surrender and all the things he loves to preach about. The more he talked about the matter of commitment and surrender, the more I realized that he was preaching the sermon I needed to hear.

I wish I could describe what happened to me that Sunday night! How shall I put it, other than to say that suddenly it dawned upon me that there was a marked degree of futility in my shallow commitment to Christ. As I sat there, tears came to my eyes. They were tears of remorseful joy!

At the close of the service he gathered us around the altar and asked me to pray the closing prayer. In my prayer I voiced—surely unintentionally, except that it came out of the moment of inspiration—the heart of the experience I had that night. I was speaking for myself—first of all—and for the congregation. In my prayer I said, "O God, we have played the fool." I continued to pray and I made my own personal surrender all over again. Since that time I have seen everything differently. I have been a different preacher, maybe not outwardly but certainly inwardly.

My life took a turn that night. Many times before it had taken such a turn. But this particular experience in which I made a deeper commitment was to have a direct bearing upon my understanding of the singularly strategic place of

SURRENDER in our encounter with God through Christ. As I began to interpret the challenge of the program of "The Ten Brave Christians," I increasingly came to see that SURRENDER to God was the key to the power of this spiritual discipline. SURRENDER . . . TOTAL AND COMPLETE SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF GOD.

I learned three great lessons that Sunday in February. *The Holy Spirit can work even when the preacher is on the "SIDELINES."* I recall that the spiritual discipline that has revolutionized the spiritual life of our church came as an answer to prayer—but not my prayer. Again, I cannot forget that perhaps the most moving conversion experience in the history of our church came as the immediate result of the preaching of someone else. Then there was my own deeper experience of conversion and surrender which took me from the *congregation* to the altar. I thank God that His Holy Spirit is not totally dependent upon the preacher . . . even when I am he!

A second thing I learned: *Total surrender to the will of God through Christ is essential to a Christian Experience.* I am absolutely committed to the fact that the fullness of life begins *only* when one is totally surrendered to the will of God. This is specifically true in regard to the spiritual discipline of "The Ten Brave Christians." Our experience has been that the results of The Great Experiment are *directly* related to the fact of *surrender*—without exception!

And a final thing I learned that Sunday Night: *Until we surrender our lives to God and live in His will, no words can better describe us than, "We have played the fool!"*

II. I, BY MYSELF

The Limping Foot

There is a hymn of the church which says, "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide."

For any who dare to consider The Great Experiment, that moment is upon us. We must decide . . .

It is as though the "Wanted" posters have been plastered to our souls. They read, "Wanted: Ten Brave Christians." And try as we may such a "Wanted" sign is not easily torn away. Will we find "Ten Brave Christians"? Just ten? Will you be one? You must decide!

There is something about this challenge that causes phenomenal soul searching. Is it that these five things are so basically reasonable? If one is really serious about God and Christ and the salvation of his own soul, then these disciplines are only a reasonable expectation. Perhaps we are disturbed because they accurately measure our degree of commitment. We are left with the thought that if we are at all serious about our religion, these things ought we to do gladly.

Why shouldn't you, as a follower of Christ, want to work in your Lord's Church at least two hours each week? Why shouldn't you, who are created in the very image of God, want to spend some time in meditation and prayer to your God each day of your life? Why shouldn't you, as a member of the Fellowship of the Faithful, want to meet with others and pray together at least once in a week? Why shouldn't you be willing to give God one tenth of your income, which is already a gift from God in the beginning? Why shouldn't you, who are dedicated to Christ, want to share your Christian experiences with others—not to brag, but because you want to share with them what has been meaningful to you?

What is meaningful may also be difficult! These disciplines can be painfully difficult when they force us into a personal confrontation with ourselves.

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT IS TAILOR-MADE FOR US BECAUSE IT MEETS US WHERE WE ARE. And that is good because most of us are unsure.

When I first faced the question of whether I could be one of the "Ten Brave Christians," I tell you frankly, I was anxious. I knew this was serious business. I was thrilled with the challenge, but my first reaction was to wave it by. I had never tried such a concentrated discipline. And I had some doubts that I could stay in the straight and narrow of the way set before me. Moreover, I was faced with the sobering question of whether I wanted my life changed. Many people have told me that they too, had some such questions about themselves.

St. Paul must have had in mind people like us when he wrote his Twelfth Chapter of Hebrews. He must have known people in his day who found it difficult and frightening to embark upon a spiritual experiment like this. For he wrote to the Hebrews concerning their need for heavenly discipline.

His words are so pointed and relevant he might have been writing to us as we try to decide to be or not to be one of the "Ten Brave Christians." If, indeed, St. Paul had been writing to us, everything he says would have encouraged us to accept this challenge.

"So tighten your loosening grip and steady your wavering hand . . . Don't wander away from the path but forge steadily onward. On the right path the limping foot recovers strength and does not collapse."

I thought of myself—I thought of us—when I read these words. Paul must have known people like us.

"Tighten your loosening grip," that's us, isn't it?

"Steady your wavering hand," that is your hand and mine!

"Don't wander away from the path," he knows us, doesn't he?

"The Limping Foot . . ." That is us too, isn't it? At best . . . we are but a Limping Foot!

"On the right path the limping foot . . . does not collapse!" My! What hope that gives me!

The Great Experiment is for us! It takes us right where we are. It is not the final answer, but it is a "right path" upon which we shall be able to recover strength. If we don't find strength—God help us! We *shall* collapse!

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT IS ALSO MADE FOR OUR CHURCHES.

How many of our local churches are at best but a Limping Foot? When taken seriously, this spiritual discipline confronts our churches with a moment to decide. We are asked if we can find just Ten Brave Christians who will undertake a reasonable discipline for just 30 days. And we wonder, don't we, if we can find at least ten. This should cause everyone of us to evaluate our local church.

In the particular case of John Wesley Church, such an evaluation produced a most disquieting conclusion. Our church was three and one-half years old before we moved into our building. We had met in a grammar school more than half enough years to have graduated. We were constantly obsessed with the notion that as soon as we moved into our new building we would become a church in the grand sense of the word. The building—we were saying—was standing in the way of fulfillment of becoming a real fellowship. And for three and one-half years this, perhaps as much as anything else, held us together in a magnificent way.

But in time, we had been in our building for an entire year. And gradually some questions began to annoy us.

Where is the church we longed to become?

Where is the power that we were certain awaited us?

Where is the increased loyalty of our members?

Where is the pulsating involvment in the ministry to mankind which our Lord expects from His faithful servants?

Where is our sense of being directed by the Will of God? "WE DON'T HAVE IT . . . (would we dare to face it?) WE DON'T HAVE IT . . ."

And our shallowness was evident in the fact that we had money to perform only a meager type of ministry in the church. We could scarcely provide the barest essentials for the present—to say nothing of the future. But it showed even more pointedly in the half-hearted and anemic way we performed our Christian service. What should have been acts of love and service were more like acts of duty—sometimes, even drudgery. Can one help being discouraged when his religion becomes a load instead of a lift?

How many of our churches are but a Limping Foot? And mainly because of the watered-down, unoffensive, and apologetic "challenges" that cause no personal confrontation among us—except perhaps that of painful endurance! Could not even a Pagan, dressed in a Botany V, with Vitalis on his hair, come among us and be rather comfortable in our church?

But no matter how well he is dressed and groomed, he will never feel at home in a church that has a poster upon the door: "WANTED: Ten Brave Christians." For here is a challenge that is worthy of a Christian church, and when the challenge is accepted by the minister of the church, the Limping Foot "gathers strength."

The Great Experiment challenges every person and every church that is but a Limping Foot.

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT PROVIDES US WITH A PLAN FOR PUTTING CHRISTIANITY INTO PRACTICE.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer long since proved that a plan for putting Christianity into practice is as necessary as it is rewarding. A recent issue of Life Magazine marked the occasion of his ninetieth birthday.

More than a half-century ago Dr. Schweitzer went up the Ogowe River near Lambarene, in the heart of Africa, and put a hospital ashore. There the hospital remains—crude but compassionate.

Lambarene and the little hospital nearby is more than a clod of African soil. It is a concept of Christian service. It is an experiment in Christian living. The fruits have been many.

Living there until recently in the person of Dr. Schweitzer was one of the world's all-time great musicians; one of her greatest theologians and authors; one of the world's greatest humanitarians—who has received almost every humanitarian honor the world has to offer. The hospital, itself, has been one of the world's great centers of healing. What is the secret of Lambarene?

Upon Dr. Schweitzer's ninetieth birthday, Life Magazine gave a salute to "The Great White Wizard" as he is called in the interview. He was asked what had been his greatest sense of satisfaction.

He didn't mention music, nor writing, nor theology, nor even religion! His greatest satisfaction had come from "the healing of the people."

But sir, you didn't mention Christianity. "Oh, well," he replied, "I have written many books on religion. But, after all, I came here to put religion into practice. Christianity

is practiced here for all to see. *Christianity will propagate only when put into practice.*"

As if that were not enough, he said, "everyone can have his little Lambarene."

This is what The Great Experiment is all about. We are called upon by God to find our own "little Lambarene." You will have found yours when you can say, "Christianity is practiced here (in my heart) for all to see." God calls upon us to put our religion into practice.

The Great Experiment provides a plan for every "Limping Foot."

It doesn't ask: Have you been saved? Are you a sinner? Will you be faithful? Are you already a Christian? It reads simply "WANTED: TEN BRAVE CHRISTIANS, who for one month, will dare to try a spiritual discipline?

There are three great reasons for accepting this challenge. First: each of us must find our own "little Lambarene" where Christianity is practiced for all to see. Next: our church needs the strength which comes only when its members practice a serious spiritual discipline. Finally, we need a "right path" to follow. This is not the only path, nor is it the final answer. But it is a plan through which every Limping Foot of us shall recover strength.

III. GOD'S WILL FOR ME

I Surrender All

The Great Experiment specifically challenges us to put God first and accept Christ as a Savior. Moreover, it offers a plan for doing so.

We need a challenge and a plan for we are so dreadfully left to ourselves. That is why our throats go dry, and our

hearts are full of hate. Because we lose our fellowship with God, (or have never known Him), we fall out among ourselves. Too many of us live on a miserable little island in a sea of confusion and distrust. Little wonder that our blessings from God seem to melt away. There is no joy, there is no peace, there is no love, there is no life in us, there is no hope, because we are orphans.

We have never learned what Jesus really meant when He said, "When you pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."; and when we have learned what He meant, we must be careful, lest we make a mockery of that prayer. There is a time when we can't pray "Our Father . . ."!

You may think this strange, because our Lord's Prayer is the most comprehensive prayer a Christian can pray. Helmut Thielicke reminds us of the vast reaches of our Lord's Prayer when he says, "It can be spoken at the cradle or at the grave. It can rise from the altars of great cathedrals and from the dark hovels of those who 'eat their bread in tears.' It can be prayed at weddings and on the gallows. And the fact is that it has been prayed at all of these places. All seven colors of our life are contained in it, and so never is there a time when we are left alone."

But there is a time when we can't pray this prayer lest we make a mockery of it. The first two words will trip us up if we are not careful . . . If anywhere, the mockery will come as we say, "Our Father . . ."

You say, "Well, if there is a danger I will make a mockery out of our Lord's Prayer, maybe I ought to stop praying it."

That is something you will have to decide for yourself. But I suspect that even if you tried, you could not stop the longing in your heart to cry out, "Our Father . . ." Is it not true that through the centuries the Fatherlessness of our world has been one of man's most terrifying thoughts? Today, it is the same with us. The more mature and know-

ing we become, the more we are appalled at how graceless, how fatherless, and how frightfully orphaned the world really is.

No, we cannot cease to pray the Prayer of our Lord. For we want "Our Father" to answer us. But beware, lest you make a mockery of our Lord's Prayer.

"How can I pray this prayer," you ask, "without making a mockery of it?" The answer to that question will come when you surrender your life to God and accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

You cannot call God, "Father," until you are willing to admit being God's child and are willing to be known as a child of God.

You will want to remind me that all of us are God's children, that He made us, and that He looks upon us as His Family. I say yes, but I am not talking about how God feels about you. How do you feel about God? We *are* all God's children, but have you ever admitted that *You* are God's child?

There are some basic laws which God has laid down. And you and I cannot break those laws of God—they are unbreakable. But rather, they are so solidly imbedded in God's purposeful creation that unless we live by them, they break us.

Take hold of your courage and answer: have you *admitted* that you are a child of God?

Measure your life by the basic laws of God's Fatherhood:

1. "God *is the Owner*"

Can you say that "God is the Owner" of your life? If you are going to claim to be a child of God, then you must come to recognize that God is the owner of your life. Paul said, ". . . ye are not your own . . . for ye are bought with a price." Unless you are going to let God be the owner of your life, you have not *consented* to be a child of God. And

until you do, you will make a mockery when you say, "Our Father . . ." "God is the Owner . . .!"

2. *"I Am a Steward"*

As a part of your willingness to be a child of God, you must realize that the concept of Christian Stewardship is one of God's basic laws. You possess nothing, you are only in charge of things. "God is the Owner . . .! I am a Steward . . .!"

3. *"I Am Responsible"*

And this must follow: you must be able to say, "I Am Responsible." Can you say that you are responsible to God? —responsible to God for *all* He has given you? And will you honor that responsibility? "God is the Owner . . .! I am a Steward . . .! I am Responsible . . .!"

4. *"If Faithful, I Will Be Rewarded"*

And the fourth Law of God is as you would suspect: "If Faithful, I will be Rewarded." This is God's Law. But the reward is not what one might at first consider. Our reward is the knowledge that we are working in the ultimate purpose and the will of Almighty God. What greater reward could you have than to have God in your life?

"God is the Owner . . .! I am a Steward . . .! I am Responsible . . .! If Faithful, I will be Rewarded . . ." (So grandly shall I be rewarded!)

5. *"If I am Unfaithful, I will be Punished!"*

And the fifth law says, "If I am Unfaithful, I will be Punished." Now that need not surprise us, for haven't we found it to be that way? If we are unfaithful to God, we will be punished. ". . . and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." A lot of us are already sick of darkness, and so this need not surprise us. But here again the nature of punishments will be more clearly understood if we see that we are punished *by* our sin rather than *for* our sins.

So here they are: five laws of God. Measure your life by them and you will determine if you have *consented* to be a child of God.

Can you honestly say of your life: "God is the Owner"...? Then you can pray, "Our Father . . ."

Can you honestly say of your relationship to God: "I am but a Steward" . . .? Then you can pray, "Our Father . . ."

Can you honestly commit yourself to admit: "I am responsible to God"...? Then you can pray, "Our Father . . ."

Are you convinced of the truth: "If faithful, I will be rewarded"...? Isn't that just like a father?

Will you dare to realize: "If unfaithful, I will be punished . . .? Just like a father!

Can you pray, "Our Father . . ."?

For God's sake, don't just sit there and throw your life away! Rise up and stand like a Child of God! Stand straight . . . and tall . . . and readily admit you are a Child of God. Take your life in your hand and hold it up and say, "I AM A CHILD OF GOD."

What all of this comes to is the ultimate importance of this matter of SURRENDER. To be a consenting child of God is to be surrendered to God through Christ, and committed to doing God's will. *You* must be willing to make this surrender or you will never be able to fully pray, "Our Father . . ."

Why are we so afraid to surrender to God's Will through Christ? Is it that we think it is too risky? That will depend upon what opinon we have of God. How do you feel about God?

Are you afraid God will put upon you some responsibility? Well it could be so. People ought not to live as irresponsibly as they live—and get away with it. When we surrender our lives to God through Christ there will come deeper responsibilities. Perhaps there will be loads that

will be hard to carry. But can't you see, any responsibility that living in God's will puts upon us is already ours—we have just failed to accept it.

Are you afraid that God will give you more than you can do? God knows us better than we know ourselves. I am convinced that He never asks us to do more than He knows we are capable of doing. One thing is certain: You and I CAN DO THE WILL OF GOD!

Are you afraid that God's will for you will make you miserable? Perhaps so—for awhile! But would that be any different from the way you are now?

Are you afraid that God will take away your blessings? Whether you surrender your life to Him or not, your blessings are all a gift from God anyway. And no matter how tightly you hold to them, you cannot render God powerless.

Do you find it difficult to surrender your life to God because it appears to be a hard life? But no . . . it is the most "happy" and "restful" life there is.

You should not be any more afraid to ask God's will be done in your life than for your child to ask that your will be done in his life. Doesn't every father want the best for his children?

God is our Father . . . God loves us . . . God knows just what is best for us . . . And what God wills for us is the most blessed thing that could come to us under any circumstances.

Why are we so afraid of God? He made us and we are His! But we are more afraid of God's will than we are anything else in all the world.

If you have tried everything else, why don't you try this? Entire surrender of your whole being to God is what is required. Total surrender—so that the language of your

heart under all circumstances is, "I surrender all . . .!" "Thy will be done!"

Your surrender of your life to God and the acceptance of Christ as your Savior and His will as your will, makes possible the complete and full forgiveness of your sins. You now are a forgiven and accepted child of your Father and His will is your greatest joy.

IV. GOD AND I TOGETHER

God Is Only Five Minutes Away

Near the end of the first week of March a member of the first group of "Ten Brave Christians" stopped by the church office for a visit. As he spoke to me his face lighted with a radiance I had never dreamed was possible. He said: "Preacher, you will not believe what has happened to me since March 1!" Before I could ask, everything about him said—all at once—"I have found God!"

And with these words as a text, he proceeded to preach one of the finest sermons ever preached in this church. I sat in amazement, enraptured at what I heard—and saw.

I was almost moved to say, "I can't believe it!" For a long time I wondered why I should be surprised. I had always preached about God changing our lives—and I believed it for He had changed mine. I had preached about what God could and would do if we gave ourselves to Him in personal surrender and practice this heavenly discipline —and I believe it. Here was a real-life example of what I believed could happen. And I was surprised.

I shall never forget how he ended his "sermon." He said: "I have spent all my life floundering around, with no purpose. And suddenly I discovered that God is only five

minutes away! Now, for the first time in my thirty years, God is in my life! And I wouldn't go back to my old way of living for anything in the world."

"GOD IS ONLY FIVE MINUTES AWAY!" But for thirty years he didn't know this. There are many who have never made this simple, but deeply profound, spiritual discovery.

"God is only five minutes away!" If that is so, then why is it that many of us when we think of God at all, think of Him as being so far removed that He might as well not even exist.

One day I found the answer while reading the morning Scripture for the day. Our procedure is to read the selected verses, pray about them, and then write out in fifty words or less how they are related to our lives. I didn't like what I read that morning, but I couldn't argue with Isaiah's indictment. I was reminded that the reason God seems so far away to many of us is a matter of our own doing.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness."

Does that not sound like you and me? "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you . . ." Although we don't like it, we can't deny it!

God does seem far away and unreachable when our HANDS ARE DEFILED WITH BLOOD; Our FINGERS WITH INIQUITY; when our LIPS HAVE SPOKEN LIES; and our tongues have MUTTERED PERVERSENESS.

God may be only five minutes away, but because of our sins, there stands between us and our God a great chasm. For many of us it is as though God lived in another world.

Isaiah accurately described our condition: ". . . Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you . . ." We must face it, our separation from God is always a matter of our doing.

Isaiah described our condition; Jesus did something about our condition. In the first place He taught us to pray His prayer. And in it He included a petition to God for forgiveness. As it turns out, among the most precious things Jesus ever said were these words: "Our Father . . . forgive us our trespasses . . ." . . . forgive us our every violation . . . our every offense . . . our every transgression . . . *our every SIN*. Jesus knew that our sins separate us from God. If we couldn't pray for and receive forgiveness we wouldn't have a chance! We must seek God's forgiveness because our sins have ALREADY come between us and God. And without forgiveness, we shall always, and always, and always be separated from God.

Some of our Christian friends pray, ". . . forgive us our debts . . ." instead of, ". . . forgive us our trespasses . . ." But "trespasses" seems the stronger word in our day. As it is now, we owe almost everybody for almost everything we "own." I wonder if we have lost the seriousness of the word "debts." Seemingly, we get excited but little about being a "debtor"—even to God.

But *"trespasser"*—that's a *"sinner"!* A violation . . . an offense . . . a transgression . . . a sin! That sounds so serious! It is deadly serious because our sins separate us from God!

If God's hand cannot reach us, it is not because it is too short, but because our sins have made a chasm between us and God. If His ear cannot hear us, it is because we are

so far away from God we can't even see his face much less bend His ear. Our separation from God is a matter of our own doing. Jesus took seriously our separation from God. He taught us to pray for forgiveness.

A second thing Jesus did: As Thielicke suggested, He made a bridge across that chasm with His cross. And because of the bridge which Jesus made, God may not be even five minutes away. You can find out for yourself!

The only way to get across the chasm which separates us from God is to walk across the bridge which Jesus made with His cross. And the only way to get across that bridge is by faith.

That is what stops many of us. We don't know how to walk by faith. We don't know how because we have never tried it. But to get across the bridge which Jesus made with His cross, we must take some steps in faith.

Before we begin each one must answer: Do you believe the bridge will hold you? Is the cross of Christ strong enough? Do you have faith in it?

Look at the shame, the suffering, the sacrifice of the cross. Can you find anything in all the world that shows stronger love? It was because of Christ's love for God that He took a cross. It was because of God's love for man that there is a cross spanning the chasm which separates us from God. Do you have faith in this cross? If not, you cannot trust the bridge it makes. If you do have faith in the cross of Christ, we are ready to begin.

We take one step across the bridge when we have faith that God wants to forgive! Remember Jesus prayed: "Our Father . . . forgive us . . ." Everytime we go to prayer Jesus apparently wanted us to remember that God wants to forgive. If you have faith that God wants to forgive you, personally, you are ready to take a second step across the bridge which spans the great divide.

God wants you to forgive others! Do you believe that? Until you do, you will never feel the full strength of God's hand leading your life, nor will you ever fully bend His ear. The failure to forgive others results in selfishness, bitterness, and even hatred. And by just such sins are we separated from God. It is not enough to have faith that God will forgive you. You must see the necessity of forgiving others—even when it hurts to forgive. Not just the little wrongs, but also the big, the great, and even the tragic wrongs. Forgive we must, else we shall never become fully forgiven by the Father.

Then . . . there is one thing yet to be done, and we shall be underway: You must forgive yourself!

Can you doubt that God wants you to forgive yourself? He gives you His forgiveness, but you can't finally accept His forgiveness until you have also forgiven yourself. There is no wisdom in continuing to beat your back sore with your own chastisement when God has already offered His forgiveness to you. You must forgive yourself. And when you do, you discover that you have already begun to move in faith across the bridge which spans the great chasm separating you from God.

We do get across to the other side by faith:

1. Faith—that there is no love stronger than the love of Christ.
2. Faith—that God wants to forgive you—for everything!
3. Faith—that God wants you to forgive others—for everything!
4. Faith—that God wants you to forgive yourself—for everything!

God is not far away—perhaps not even five minutes away! If you want to find God, draw near with faith and cross over the bridge.

The only thing you need to take initially on this journey

of faith is your *will.* The will to have God in your life and to live your life in God is all it takes. Your *will!* You must surrender your will to Christ and then know that living your life in God is a matter of the will!

Hannah Whitall Smith, in the *The Christian's Secret of A Happy Life* put this simply so we wouldn't miss it. All you have to do is "only see to it that your will is in God's hands, that your inward self is abandoned to His working, that your choice, your decision, is on His side; and there leave it."

She put it even more plainly: ". . . we must set our faces like a flint to carry out this will, and must respond with an emphatic 'I will' to every 'thou shalt' of His."

If you are to fully know God, there is no substitute for this complete, total surrender. When you surrender your will to God, so that *you will for you,* what *God wills for you,* it is done! You are living in God and God is living in you!

And then it becomes precious in your soul to pray, "Our Father . . . forgive me . . ., so that Your will can be done in my life."

If you walk in faith across the bridge which spans the chasm separating you and God, you will find that God's hand is not shortened; His ear is not heavy; and He is not even five minutes away!

Part 3

THE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

The Joy of Witnessing

Each of the persons who became one of the "Ten Brave Christians" committed themselves to "Witness for God, your experience to others." The members of the group found it a joy to tell of their experiences.

Someone put it like this: "Yes, the rich experiences of this month of spiritual discipline must be shared. We can't possibly 'tell everyone' what The Great Experiment has done for us, but we can write it down. We must share it with all who are interested. We must share our experiences so anyone who wants God in his life will know at least one way of opening his life for God to come in."

Each of the experiences shared in Part III are simple attempts to "bear witness" in a personal way. In some cases the person tells his own story; in others, someone other than the person relates the experience. In each instance the writer has assumed that, apart from a brief note of identification, no further introduction or explanation is needed.

One further word: Not any one of us brings to your attention the spiritual or technical "background" sufficient for this task. And certainly, none pretends to be known as an authority on such matters. But each one speaks with authority about the Christian Experience that changed his life. And each one would say to you—and is saying to you now—if you are not satisfied with your life as it is . . . if you want God in it. surrender your life to Him and try The Great Experiment. It will change your life.

I. NEW INSIGHT

The Fruits of Faith

A salesman of bulk cement, age 35; the father of five children. He shared this experience at the prayer group meeting on April 20, 1965.

About two years ago I made a call in Dothan, Alabama to Mr. 'Smith', owner of a construction company. I asked his receptionist if Mr. 'Jones' was in.

"We don't have a Mr. 'Jones'."

"Sure you do—he is the president of the company."

"No, that is Mr. 'Smith'."

"Yes, I meant Mr. 'Smith'." (I had been calling on him regularly, once or twice a month for more than a year. He had been designated as a special customer. I had a file on him, his family, his habits, etc.)

She directed me to the door of his office which was about ten steps away. And again I said, "Good morning, Mr. 'Jones'." He corrected me and laughed about my error.

As I left his office to return to Tallahassee, I could not help wondering whom I knew named, 'Jones'. The only person who came to mind was a man whom I had called on just once in Panama City, Florida. I felt compelled (for some reason or another) to call upon this man.

So the next morning I drove the hundred miles to Panama City. He was in, which was unusual. I introduced myself to him because he didn't recognize me from that one previous call. Nor did I recognize him.

I told him why I was there and what company I represented. He said, *"I have been trying to get in touch with you!* I am glad you called on me today. Your company was good to me in the years I used a great amount of concrete, and I would like to stay in their good graces. If you will see my purchasing agent, he will give you a purchase order."

At the time I thought it was merely an unusual coincidence. Then, on April 20, at the prayer group meeting, several people shared experiences of such "coincidences." In the light of putting God first in their lives, they had begun to look upon them as other than coincidence. And suddenly I began to rethink many of the things that had happened to me. Things I had charged off as coincidence or "the fickle finger of fate."

I recalled an incident which occurred when I was about eleven years old. With a couple of other boys I was exploring an old cave. I had walked faster, so that the one flashlight among us was of no value in the darkness of the cave. Suddenly, I stopped! I had one foot in the air, but *for some reason,* I felt I must not put it down to make another step. I vividly remember the power of the urge not to put another foot forward.

I called for the light and we looked immediately before me at a drop off of about six feet. Just one more step and I would have tumbled into a pit that was alive with rattlesnakes. All these years I have thought it was a coincidence —or luck or fate. But for the first time, on April 20, I took a new look!

No longer will "coincidence"—or "fate" or "luck"—serve as an adequate explanation to me!

As of the night of April 20, I had spent three wonderful weeks in a serious spiritual discipline. I had been reading my Bible daily, praying with a depth and meaning I had never known before, and thinking about God all through each day. I have been making a serious effort to live my life in God's guidance. I now look upon experiences like I have related here as evidence of God's divine guidance in my life.

The great change that occurred in my life can be expressed in a simple way. Previously, I would have explained

such experiences as "the fickle finger of fate." Now I see them as among the "fruits of faith."

II. NEW CALLING

I Must Give a Witness

This husband (and his wife) were members of the March Group. His "New Calling" was among the first great decisions that came to light. His experience had a tremendous influence as you will discover.

The following is the experience that came to one of the twenty-two persons who tried the Great Experiment. He is the twenty-five year old co-owner of a rapidly expanding chain of drug and cosmetic stores. Because of his Christian experience in the month of March, he found a new concern for the welfare of people.

The fact that many people bought drugs from his stores to cure physical ills had long been a source of joy to him—and security. But in the light of his Christian experience he became concerned about the welfare of the people who bought his drugs. He gave voice to an inspirational thought:

> **"How many of my customers' physical ailments are related to their lack of spiritual life? Somewhere I read that it takes 60 million sleeping pills to put the American people to sleep every night. There must be many deeply troubled hearts and minds and souls. What so many of us need is a right relationship to God.**
>
> **"Any relief for illnesses that are rooted in unhealthy spiritual life is only temporary. With my drugs they get relief but not help."**

His thought was that if people could find the spiritual experience that would do for them what his experience had done for him, there wouldn't be nearly so many miserable, unhappy, and sickly people.

But what to do? With great excitement and uncanny courage he determined to try an experiment of his own.

For every new prescription customer, he would give a "good book" as compliments of the store. The customer would read on the inside front cover:

> **"Thank you for letting us aid in your physical health! May we also recommend this book to aid in your spiritual health. It has been helpful to many people. If you find it helpful to you, you may wish to return our cost of the book to aid in continuing this service to others. If you do not find the book helpful or do not desire to read it, you may keep it with our compliments. May God bless you."**

He determined to try this personal experiment. There was no way to predict how it would be received. But he had the feeling that the right book in the right hands at the right time could make a difference in one's spiritual life and consequently, one's physical health. (He readily admitted that such a practice was a poor way to make a living, but he continued to press his concern for people.)

But how to find the right book? Not just a book known to be clever, or popular, or provocative. But a book that would speak to people about their spiritual life and their personal encounter with God. A book that would help others who wanted it, find the personal salvation for their souls that would mean to them what it had meant to him.

What book would be used? There was surely no attitude of censure of the many books that thrill men's souls. But not one of those examined finally captured the experience he felt he must share with others.

And suddenly . . . it seemed clear enough! His "experience" had come to him in the fellowship and discipline of "The Ten Brave Christians." Why not share the experience of that fellowship and discipline with other people?

"To share . . . to witness . . ." Yes! And as his personal witness he would give copies of the book to his customers

across his prescription counter. This is one reason why this book is being written.

III. NEW COMMITMENT

I Have Always Been a Christian

A mother with one son twelve years old. She began attending John Wesley Church just as The Great Experiment was first making its impact upon us.

All my life my father taught me to love the Scripture. When I was growing up prayer was always a part of our home. Prayer and Bible reading have been a continuing practice of my life since I was a little girl. I can't remember when I was not a Christian.

All of this time I have thought that being a Christian meant giving up something. But on the very first day I went to the Christian Home-Builders Class, I heard Mr. Teague talk about surrendering our lives to God. The more I thought about the word "surrender," the more concerned I became. I didn't know how to surrender my life to God anymore than I already had.

I had been a Christian all of my life. I had not only read, but had studied the Scriptures—I have read the Bible through many times. I had experienced the Presence of God in my life; I had depended upon God all of my life.

But that word "surrender" kept coming back to my mind. How can I really *surrender* my life to God more than I have?

It was on Sunday afternoon, March 14, that I found my answer. I was doing some things around the house, but my mind was constantly on the matter of "surrender." I kept asking, "how?" In an attitude of prayer, I kept asking this question over and over again!

And suddenly, the thoughts began to come so rapidly I could not write them in full. But I managed to jot down some bits of my thoughts that meant so much to me.

As I thought of the word "surrender" it brought to my mind, of all things, a time of war between two countries. When one side loses, their first action is to surrender to their victors. This point of surrender has not been reached without a fight and it is not a happy time. But the surrender is complete—their men, their equipment, their land, and most of all, their pride and independence. I thought of the struggle I had been having in my own soul.

As I considered this, suddenly, I realized that this is exactly what God expects me to do—surrender all that I am to Him; my life, my service, my pride, and my independence. My surrender must be complete!

Again I thought of the two countries. On the side that surrenders there are good men, equipment, and land. There are average men, equipment, and land. And along with these, poor and very poor men, land and equipment.

The victor will accept all of these categories and work with each. The good will strengthen into best. Average will be motivated to better. Poor will be given an opportunity to respond. And even the very poor will be given the opportunity. But if that which is very poor makes no response, the victor will turn his attention to others.

At this point I thought; I can "give up" the poor and very poor habits in my life, but this takes me no further because when I "give up" something, I give them to no one.

On the other hand, when I surrender my life to God I surrender the good, the average, the poor, and the poorest. And God will work with each category, God can decide—and help me to decide—what in my life needs to be cast off.

He is the Victor—so to speak—and He will raise each

category or cast aside those things which are unimportant and unworthy.

This was a new thought for me and because of it I made a new commitment. I surrendered my life to God, and He accepted me as I am—my good, my average, my poor, and my poorest. He will teach me through His word, through prayer, and through my service to Him and to others, what matters in my life and how to live in His will. This is what it means to me to surrender my life to God!

IV. NEW "VISION"

The "Happy" Experience

The Reverend Ben C. Johnson of the Lay Witness Mission Movement, in speaking to The Layman's Conference of the Southeastern Jurisdiction, told of his visit to a prayer group meeting.

For three months I had heard of the work of the Holy Spirit which was under way at The John Wesley Church . . . how I wanted to talk with these folks who had been in the stream of the Spirit! Finally a time came when I could visit. Danny Morris, whom I had just met at a communications workshop at Emory, filled the air with expectancy.

Brother Sam and his mother entertained us at the Capital City Country Club with a delightful sirloin—amazing how easy it is to talk while over the aroma of a good steak.

After dinner we hastened on to one of the branch banks. In the conference room there were a dozen people assembled. They were surprised to see us. But our excitement was far greater than their surprise since we had heard just enough at supper to double our interest.

I asked Sam to let me simply be a listener. He graciously consented by not calling on me to say anything about my own particular interests. One by one I listened to living witnesses of Jesus Christ.

One man sitting just across from me worked in the grocery business. With a radiant beam in his eye he began describing what Jesus Christ had done for him. His life had been dull and uninteresting; he long since had asked that all-important question, "What is life all about?" Yet he was for a long time filled with frustration because he had received no answer. I got more excited as he told how the program of "The Ten Brave Christians" had challenged his life and given him a new direction and the answer to his question.

While this man was sharing I kept noticing out of the corner of my eye, a slightly-built man sitting two seats from me. All the time the others were talking he kept switching from hip to hip as though he could not sit still. He smiled . . . he twisted his hands . . . he looked at the group . . . and twisted some more! Like a three-year-old at Churchill Downs on Derby Day he kept standing in the shoot ready to run. "What did he have to say?" I wondered.

A lady shared. She was a victim of alcohol for several years and now she had found in Christ, the answer to her inner frustration. Christ had made her a whole person. This was no negative fanatic; she just did not need alcohol any longer.

Finally, we got to the next man, the man who couldn't sit still. His name was "Happy." I never learned more than that; I suppose that was enough. Hap began his story:

> **"This is the greatest thing in the world, this brave Christian deal . . ." As he talked his countenance glowed with a mingled joy, love and excitement. He was contagious!**
> **"I will tell you what this spiritual discipline has done for me,"—all the time he was switching hips, twisting his hands, and making a few amusing faces—"it has changed my life."**

He went on to tell about several things that had long been deep problems for him—and his recent victory over them.

> **"Right now," he said, "both of my partners are out of town and the business is as rushed as it can be. Now, when I was nervous," he uttered—between a gesture, a jolt, and a jerk—I**

secretly smiled to myself. "When I was nervous I would have climbed the wall under such pressure. Now, I just go in the back room and look up, asking, 'Lord, what will we do?' And He gives me the answer."

Hap's own joyous, jovial spirit would have been witness enough; his worded expression added something else, and then he said, "You know the Lord has a sense of humor too." He went on explaining that he had supposed it to be the Lord's humor—and he related an experience.

"The other night while I was having my evening prayer-time I really made contact, got plugged in . . . you know! It was a wonderful time. But when I finished and crawled into bed, I got scared nearly to death. The room had been completely dark for quite a while. I casually opened my eyes and began to see lights flashing on and off . . . One here, one there . . . Everywhere I looked there were little lights all in the room flashing on and off . . . on and off! I sat up in my bed and whispered to my wife, 'Rose, Rose—wake up! Rose, wake up, I'm about to have a vision!' (I hadn't been a Christian but three months and here I was having a vision already!)"

Then Rose did sit up. She looked about, hopeful to share in Hap's vision. For an instant she, too, was stunned by what she saw.

"I don't know anything about visions! Can you make out any meaning to it?" Hap whispered.

Then Rose exclaimed, "Hap, you aren't having a vision . . . those are lightning bugs that got out of Peggy's fruit jar!"

I agreed with Happy; the Lord does have a sense of humor!

V. NEW DISCOVERY

God Wants Us to Succeed

A housewife in her early thirties, the mother of three children. The "New Discovery" which she made came over a period of several days. The first part was related to the prayer group as a "coincidence." Subsequent events led her to a profound and exciting conclusion!

Dr. William Sangster wrote, "When a thing is plainly right, it is, perhaps, academic whether I thought of it myself or whether God told me. But one thing is certain, I thought of far, far, fewer sweet things to do, and hard things before I learned to listen to God than I do now that it is my daily practice. *So perhaps it was God after all helping me to think.*"

Throughout the Great Experiment there have been many instances of ". . . God after all helping me to think."

It is the early morning practice of each member of the group of Ten Brave Christians to write out "one totally unselfish and unexpected act of kindness or generosity" to be done that day. "Name the person—then act during the day, vigorously and with love and compassion. Keep a written record of the (1) reaction of the person toward whom the kindness is extended and (2) the effect of this act upon you personally."

One member of the group related the following "experience" in which she concludes ". . . it was, after all, God helping me to think."

On the morning of March 4, she had written out her "unselfish and unexpected act of kindness or generosity" for the day: "I will call 'D.R.' and be a friend to her." It was a simple act of kindness. But as she looked back, she was profoundly impressed with what happened. Here is how she described it.

"All day, I looked for an excuse to call; the more I thought about it the more I wanted to forget it, and I did.

"After dinner that evening I was so tired from my busy day, all I could think about was getting to bed early. The children were in bed at an early time for them and the house was quiet around 8:30.

"Upon going to bed I had an uneasy feeling, but thinking to myself that the rest of the day is mine.

"The phone rang and its sound reminded me that I had forgotten something. Before I answered, I 'knew' it was 'D.R.' I knew it was!

"We talked briefly about a church matter. She then said, 'It looked like I had to call you tonight.'

"What a coincidence"; I said, "I wanted to call and talk with you also."

"We talked at length about family, church, and school. We both admitted we had talked too long (more than a half hour) but we both enjoyed it so much.

"Upon hanging up the phone my thought was—that was my good deed for the day and I almost forgot about it. What a coincidence that she should call me!

"Some days later the husband of 'D.R.' called to discuss a school matter: I commented to him how I enjoyed chatting with his wife theo ther night.

"Yes," he said, "she told me about the conversation you had and how much it meant to her. She has mentioned it several times."

"I went back to my notes for March 4, and wrote, 'What a coincidence—she would be a good friend to have."

For Sunday, March 7, the same member of the group wrote her "good deed" for the day: "I shall call my mother and inquire of the funeral plans for my grandmother." In telling of this experience she said:

"I knew the details already but a call to 'inquire' would give me the opportunity to say my feelings of sympathy and love for my mother at the time of her sadness.

"I called her at home in the early morning, to find that she had just departed for South Florida.

"I then forgot the matter thinking I had done the best I could—my act of kindness was attempted if not completed. And anyway, I would see her tomorrow at the funeral.

"That evening at 7:30 she called long distance. I asked why she had called and she said, 'I had to call and talk with you. I know you are coming tomorrow morning but I just had to call you.' I told her my sympathy and love for her during the moments of her

sadness. And even across the miles I felt unusually close to her as we talked. It had been a long time since I had felt so close to her.

"And when I hung up the phone I was very still—coincidence? No! And then came the deeper question: Can God be this serious about my keeping up this program."

It is interesting that a third "incident" occurred in the experience of the same person. She described it in this way:

"Under the date of Thursday, March 11, my 'unselfish and unexpected act of kindness or generosity' was written down between 5:50 and 6:60 in the morning; 'I will witness to someone who needs assurance!' Perhaps it would be a close friend.

"The entire day was spent at home alone with the children. Many times the phone rang, but each call was about business only. I kept in my mind my 'deed' for the day, but could not find an opportunity to perform it.

"In the evening at 9:00 a friend called. We had not talked for several weeks. But I had the feeling that this was the person in my plan. I asked her why she had called and she told me she had been close to home for several days with sick children. She wanted to talk. She seemed very weary.

"I immediately recalled to myself that at 5:50 a.m. I had decided to talk with someone who needed assurance. Was she calling for a word of assurance? Yes, she was—the same assurance I had promised 'a friend' earlier in the morning.

"And immediately there came the thought: 'God's hand is at work here.' For the third time in seven days, it seemed so clear.

"We had a short conversation on generalities. I soon asked if she had seen the television program about an experiment in our church. She said, 'No. Tell me about it.'

"I said, 'It lists five ways to discipline your life if you want to know God.'

"There was a disturbance at her end of the line, and she said, 'I will have to go now, there is someone at the door.'

"I knew this was the person and the time for me to give my witness, but I had accomplished so little. Even so, I promptly forgot the matter, turned off the lights and retired for the night.

"Within minutes she called back and wanted to know more about the experiment. I explained the five points of discipline and she was deeply impressed. She recalled that her mother had long practiced a similar discipline and immediately she had a new thought. This sort of thing was the secret of her mother's radiant life. 'This was Mother's secret and you have stumbled upon it. I know it will work.' I gave my personal witness and asked her to try it. When we said goodnight, I knew my 'good deed' had been completed. For the third time in seven days. God had helped me to succeed!"

These three experiences had a tremendous impact—not upon the three persons so much as upon the one. What happened to the one can be likened unto a miracle. For she will live out her days with the ringing of a great truth in her soul: *God wants us to succeed.*

So simple a truth, isn't it? But as the group of "Ten Brave Christians" met together, this simple truth burst upon us like a thunderclap. It is as easy to plan for success as it is to plan for failure. "Yes, God does want us to succeed. We surrender our lives to God and we become partners."

We had already discussed one side of this partnership. When we are committed and surrendered to Him, *God* can *do* mighty things through our lives. But here was a new thought: When we are committed and surrendered to God, *we* can *do* things that help God with His world. You ask, "What is the difference in *God* doing something *through* us and *us* doing something *with* God? There is not a lot of difference, except that it refines the idea of our partnership with God. We are not only instruments of—we are partners with! He is the Senior Partner; I am the junior partner.

If a junior partner loses, the senior partner also loses—they are partners together. If the junior partner does well, the senior partner prospers also—they are partners together.

And on Tuesday night, March 9, the group began to see that we are junior partners with God.

If the junior partner loses, the Senior Partner also loses. If the junior partner does well, the Senior Partner prospers —for we are partners together with God.

And again the thought had more meaning: *God does want us to succeed!*

VI. NEW LIFE

God Is Love

A housewife in her early thirties, the mother of two children. A Charter Member of the Church.

I have been looking for something all my life, but I looked in all the wrong places. Although I was brought up in the church, I never seemed to reach anything spiritual there. Church became, as I grew older, a social thing. About the only thing that ever touched me in church was an occasional favorite old song, but even then the good feeling I received was just an emotion and short lived.

As I grew older I began to do the things the Church had always warned me not to do. They never explained exactly why I should not drink and if it gave me an hour or two of peace-of-mind, so why shouldn't I drink? I became guilt-ridden as I did the things I had been taught not to do, but since I could think of no "valid reason" not to do them, I continued to live as I pleased. In doing so I became nervous, irritable, and cynical. I began having headaches, upset stomach, (the beginning of an ulcer) and many other aches and pains too numerous to mention.

It is hard to explain to anyone who has never been completely cynical about God, just how unhappy a person can become. I would sometimes sit up in bed in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, wondering what was to become of me. I prayed, but never really expected my prayers to be answered, and they never were! Since I am a normally intelligent person (I think), I wondered a lot about life after death, why we were here, etc. but the answers always seemed to be just around the corner. I talked to probably a half-dozen ministers and psychologists. They listened patiently to my complaints, told me I should mature, and sympathized with me in all my trials and tribulations and showed me the door. Each time I left as confused and cynical as when I arrived and always wondered why these counselors felt they had something to contribute to troubled people.

Then at Sunday School one Sunday, after a series of lessons on "How to Have a Life That Matters," I heard of a religious experiment devised by the teacher while in earnest and desperate prayer. The teacher said he knew his Sunday School class had energy and talent that could be put to use for God but he hadn't been able to channel it. He had prayed about this matter and in some moments of inspiration, he wrote out the program of "The Ten Brave Christians."

When I first heard of the Experiment, I felt an immediate urge to "try it," but since all my friends were anything but spiritually minded, I knew they would tease me. I also felt I would *never* be able to pray in public or witness to others. I have always been mortally afraid to speak a word in front of a group.

To my surprise, my husband expected me to join the group from the beginning. He said, "If this can change your life, you'll be able to witness."

On the last day before the experiment started I decided to try it.

You see, I had tried everything else. I had tried painting (I thought I was to be another Rembrandt, for awhile). I had tried partying (I just woke up with another hangover). I had even tried church work, (it seemed no one at the church did anything right, but me).

As a last resort I decided to put everything I had into The Great Experiment.

The first two days (Monday and Tuesday) I felt very noble and good, getting up at 5:30 and doing those good deeds, etc. Then, Tuesday night at the group meeting I picked as my inspirational book "Prayer Can Change Your Life." That night I sat up until the early hours of the morning reading that book. It is a very scientific account of how a psychologist took three groups of troubled people: one group prayed as they had always prayed and got *no* response in a given time; the second group was given the help of psychology and got a limited response; the third group combined psychology with prayer according to the author's formula. The third group had an amazing amount of help. Some were cured of illnesses such as ulcers, asthma, etc.; others improved their relationships with those around them—wives, mothers-in-laws, etc.

Wednesday morning during my 5:30 session, I tried to pray as outlined in the book. I prayed as I had never prayed before. I brought up honestly all the sins that I had tried to hide from myself for years; all the guilts, all the fears, all the worries. This was the most painful experience of my life and that Wednesday was the most painful *day* of my life.

On Thursday morning, I finally went to the church, ostensibly to do my two hours work, but really to talk to the pastor. I poured out to him my doubts about God, and he

helped me to begin to understand how juvenile were my ideas about God. I cried that day until I felt that if I did not find God, I would lose my mind. That afternoon while doing the family ironing in bits—and crying a lot—I had what I felt was a completely new and original idea: GOD IS LOVE! That was so "new" an idea to me that I was overwhelmed! God was not in the clouds, or next door or with the preacher. God was in *my* heart! God forgave me all of the sins I had ever committed and His love was flowing over me like waves in the ocean. How can I ever explain my joy on that day?

I had found a reason for living! I had found a peace I had never thought possible. The wonder and joy I felt were so immense that words cannot express it! I felt God's love pouring through my body, and simply pulsing through my veins. I loved everybody and I wanted to tell them of my discovery. I felt like writing the President of the United States, telling him I had discovered the answer to all problems.

As I went about my tasks on Friday, the answers to all the questions I had been worrying about for years came pouring into my consciousness so rapidly I simply could not digest them all at once. I would think, "I'll put that idea aside until I have time to think about it." I wanted to stop people on the street and tell them I had found God, but I knew they wouldn't understand what I was talking about. When I came across a troubled person on that day, their troubles seemed to hit me like a physical blow. I could see God shining out of my children's eyes (and the eyes of other children too) and I could feel my love for the children simply radiating out to them. I felt that if I could only turn my eyes inward, I would be able to see God face-to-face. I had such a strong feeling of God's presence,

I actually looked in the mirror and was surprised to see that I had not changed at all.

I never expect to have an experience like that again until I die. In fact, that day I thought, "This is what Heaven will be like, only *more* so." And I still believe this to be true.

On Saturday afternoon as daily cares and trials began piling in again, I began to lose that strong sense of God's presence and became temporarily depressed. I felt God was leaving me and although I prayed very hard, I wasn't able to regain the joyous feeling. It took about two weeks for the feeling to completely wear off, but I am left with a sense of complete dedication and trust in God. I am not able to keep my faith pure and sometimes I am very discouraged with myself for straying from what I know I should do. I feel so humble when I realize that anything I do for God is less than an atom when compared with what He has done for me. Lowly me who doesn't really deserve anything at all—all I have ever done is exist, with nothing good to show for my 32 years but two beautiful, fine boys, who after all are only a gift from God.

I am learning every day more about God's plan for me. Every day is an adventure and as exciting as it was when I was a child.

When I look back over the last few months and realize how my life has been changed, I can hardly believe it. But I *know* the only way I can continue to be happy is to put Faith in God first; love for others second, and my own ego and pride down, down, down. If I can be as an empty vessel —and invite Christ in—there is no end to how He can use me! In this way, He has already touched the lives of some of my friends and close relatives.

When I give myself to God's direction for the day, it is unbelievable how smoothly the day runs. Even the little things such as finding parking places, finding people in

when I call, and many other little incidents seem to click into place. When I am about to do something that is not God's will, I feel an uncomfortable twinge and there is no doubt in my mind that I should not do it. The one time I went ahead and did what I knew I shouldn't do, someone ended up in the hospital as a result!

Part 4

THE PROGRAM

I. A DREAM COME TRUE

This Close to a Miracle

It is a thrilling experience to be involved in a miracle! It is even more exciting when the miracle can be anticipated. Little wonder then that *The John Wesley—Great Experiment* is both thrilling and exciting.

We call it a miracle for there is no other way to describe what has happened. If you surrender your life to God's will and practice these five disciplines for even thirty days, you will call it a miracle!

"A miracle, yes! But why call it an experiment?"

For the answer, we must return to the time prior to March 1—the "Dark Ages" of our group's spiritual development. Before the first group tried this spiritual discipline in March, we were like a kindergarten scientist who had no idea what would happen if he put together two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen.

Instead of two, we made use of five "Spiritual Elements": Prayer, service, tithing, Bible study and Christian concern for others. What would happen when we used as a catalyst, personal and total surrender to the will of God, we didn't know, and we never could have predicted what has happened.

Again, it is an experiment in that like a scientist we took known elements of the spiritual life and blended them in

the crucible of our personal surrender to God. Until we *experienced this experiment,* we had no earthly way of knowing what would happen, for we had never "proved" the result.

But when one surrenders his life to God and practices a serious spiritual discipline, it ceases to be an "experiment" and miraculously becomes a "miracle."

A miracle! How else can you describe what happens when one is "born again, not of the flesh but of the spirit"? Even more miraculous than the blending of oil and water is the blending of the spiritual and physical into a unity dedicated, once and for all, to the will of God.

It is a miracle!

One month we were involved in a lot of nothing. The next month—through personal surrender to God and the practice of a spiritual discipline—we were involved in a miracle!

We now invite you to share in this experience.

II. HOW TO BEGIN

Face the Facts

The program of "The Ten Brave Christians" which God gave to us here in John Wesley Methodist Church leaves us filled with wonders and gratitude. We feel it will bring other people into a relationship with God in which they will find ". . . The peace of God, which passes all understanding . . ."

This spiritual discipline emphasizes putting God first in our lives. Why we should be so surprised that God will make a miracle out of our lives when we put Him first is still a mystery. For this is precisely what He has always said He would do. Many who have tried every other way have at

last put God first and have found a life filled with peace, and power and purpose. Oh, what a difference it makes!

Realistically, we must face the fact that not every person who tries The Great Experiment will have a dramatically transformed life. For not every person will finally surrender his life to God through Christ in a given month. And without complete and total surrender, God cannot completely transform a life.

If you were to become a member of such a group and your group experienced about the same response as other groups, this is what you may look forward to—

One-third of your group will have transformed lives.

One-third will be deeply affected and along with the first one-third will want to continue.

About one-third will not have been too deeply affected. They will come to the end of the month with a somewhat bewildered feeling or a feeling that "nothing happened."

Of the first two-thirds of your group, all that needs to be said is that they will have found the secret to a happy life, and if they will continue to put God first in their lives and love Him with all of their heart, all of their mind, and all of their strength; they will never go back to their old way of living.

Of the last one-third to whom "nothing happened," we now know that if they will try and try again (with special emphasis on learning how to pray) some of them will sooner or later surrender their lives to God and discover a new life. A common characteristic of this latter one-third is that they are "waiting" for something to happen—waiting for God to bring about a sudden miracle in their lives. Generally, it does not come this way. When it does come, it will be the result of some specific effort on their part to become aware of God and serve Him by the surrender of their lives to His will.

There are several things to be done before scheduling a month for The Great Experiment. Some suggestions.

1. Order 20 copies of this book and the companion booklet, "Introduction . . . The John Wesley Great Experiment," and ask at least 20 members of your church (or class) to read this material carefully.

2. Order the two-hour magnetic tape in four parts, for playing in small groups and classes within the church. (See page 83-84 for description of content.)

3. Invite interested persons to meet together in the home of one of the members for the purpose of discussing the mechanics of the program as outlined in the booklet.

4. In your discussion of the booklet give special emphasis to Chapters Two and Six. You will note that in Chapter Six we say, "DO NOT DEVIATE IN ANY WAY from the program as it is laid out." Here is our reasoning. These are five independent and essential steps in becoming aware of God's transforming power in one's life. We feel they will be helpful if practiced independently. But we know from experience that there is a cumulative value in putting them all together. They add to each other, they supplement each other, and like laminated wood, together they become many times more than five times stronger than when practiced separately. Our practice then has been to follow this entire program EXACTLY as laid out.

Great care should be given to interpret the five disciplines so there can be no misunderstanding on the part of any participant. Each specific discipline might well serve as the emphasis of a sermon or a Sunday School lesson. Over a period of five or six weeks the group to whom the challenge is presented will have been made aware that The Great Experiment is serious business.

Toward the last of the period of preparation, the Commitment Form (see page 94) should be mimeographed and

made available upon request to all who are interested. (There is value in having the interested person request the Commitment Form rather than making it generally available.) There are always some persons whose decision is fleeting. The best procedure is to ask the interested person to take the Form home, fill it out and mail it to the person in your group who is selected to receive the written commitments. Not everyone will follow through. Always there are persons who say something like this: "You know, I meant to be a part of this prayer group, but I just never got around to filling out the form." But those who do "get around" to making their commitment in this way are really interested, and their desire and/or sense of need makes a difference.

The "Schedule for Morning Prayer and Meditation" (see page 95) should be mimeographed and made available to each participant. Whereas the Scripture Readings for the first month (see page 96) deal with personal faith in the short scope of a few verses, the second-month Scripture Passages (see page 97) for those who desire to continue, are somewhat different in purpose. These longer passages point to mental and spiritual qualities of the Christian life. It is suggested that the related passages before and after each specific reference in the selections for the second month, be read and incorporated in one's morning meditation and prayer.

A notebook for keeping this spiritual diary will become a treasure to each participant.

Finally, this fact must be faced: THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A CONCERNED AND CONSECRATED LAY PERSON WHO WANTS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS CHURCH A LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERS. *Let him come forward and join with his minister in presenting the challenge to a deeper commit-*

ment in Christ. Let the minister join with him in sounding the uncompromised gospel call to Christian commitment. This emphasis cannot be delegated as a responsibility. There must be at least one person—lay or clergy—who will put God first in his own life and lovingly, patiently, and prayerfully invite others to do the same.

BEFORE YOUR GROUP BEGINS

—Order the RECOMMENDED BOOKS listed on page 92 Teach Me to Pray; The Great Discovery; and The Victory of Mary Christopher are INDISPENSABLE. (Each person or married couple in a group should have one of each.)

—Order "The Miracle On Magnetic Tape" with Guide to Listening). The tape is especially useful in small groups or classes and may be used throughout the church generally. It is specifically recommended for all groups-in-preparation for The Great Experiment. See page 83-84 for description of contents and/or sample of "A Guide to Listening.")

—Mimeograph pages 94-95 and your own personalized version of "A Beginning List" on page 86-87. (If every person in the group does not have access to a book or booklet, page 96 should be mimeographed.)

—Secure a collection of books similar to the list on page 92-93. Reading a good book a week is an essential part of The Great Experiment.

THE MIRACLE ON MAGNETIC TAPE

CASSETTE 1—PART 1

THE THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE . . . (30 minutes)

Dr. Mack Stokes and Dr. Claude Thompson, Professors of Systematic Theology at Candler, participated on a panel which produced a spontaneous and unrehearsed 29-minute tape, moderated by Reverend Russell Bow of Louisville, Kentucky. Other panel members are: Reverend Joe Clark, Reverend Billy Cox, Mr. Sam Teague, and Reverend Danny E. Morris.

Drs. Thompson and Stokes give their candid reactions to this spiritual discipline from their perspective as Christian Theologians.

CASSETTE 1—PART 2

A LAYMAN'S PERSPECTIVE . . . (30 minutes)

Dr. Thompson, in introducing Mr. Teague, relates a brief historical survey of Renewal Movements in the recent life of the church.

Mr. Teague in turn:

—gives a brief summary of events which led to the advent of The Great Experiment . . .

—describes how this challenge was presented in The Christian Home-Builders Class and the church as a whole . . .

—elaborates in some detail, the implications of the five disciplines.

—tells of making "the great discovery" . . .

—gives some words of caution . . .

CASSETTE 2—PART 3

A MINISTER'S PERSPECTIVE . . . (20 minutes)

In sharing this witness, the minister:
—briefly describes the situation in the church out of which the inspiration for The Great Experiment came as an answer to prayer . . .
—specifies the indispensable importance of Total Surrender . . .
—elaborates upon the schedule for the half-hour period of meditation for each morning of the month of discipline . . .
—underscores the fact that The Great Experiment is "only a beginning" . . .

CASSETTE 2—PART 4

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS . . . (20 minutes)

Several pertinent questions which are of common interest:
—How do we initiate this from the very beginning?
—How did you approach the preparation of your class for this experience?
—How does personal savings enter into your interpretation of Christian Tithing?
—What happened in other groups and classes within the church?
—Where do I start . . . one, two, three?
—What does the "two hours to God" involve?
—What is involved in the prayer-group meeting each week?
Tape and Guides—$6.75 Additional Guides—$3.00/100

Order these and other Renewal materials from

TIDINGS

1908 Grand Ave., Nashville, Tenn. 37203

Include 35¢ for postage and handling. Prices subject to change without notice.

III. MISCELLANEOUS DISCOVERIES

The Technique

"WANTED: TEN BRAVE CHRISTIANS . . ."

This is a *personal* spiritual discipline. The challenge will be more effectively communicated on a personal basis. Therefore, there should be no emphasis on "quotas" and there should be no attempt to "hard sell" the challenge. (The figure *"Ten" Brave Christians* does not suggest a quota as such, but rather supports the idea of the dynamics of small groups.)

If as many as 14 (or more) persons commit themselves to try The Great Experiment, it will be well to have two groups of 7 (or more) in each group. If less than 10, but more than 5 commit themselves, it will be well to continue as planned. An unusually small number—4 or less—would indicate the need for further cultivation. Prayer groups of 8-12 in number are ideal.

". . . Who Will Meet Once Each Week to Pray Together."

This is a time of *prayer, sharing* and *study*. Each emphasis should be given approximately equal time. Ideally, a prayer group meeting should last about 1½ hours.

Select a quiet, undisturbed meeting place where the group can sit comfortably in a small circle.

Silent prayer at the beginning of each meeting sets the mood of prayer for the evening.

Most groups wish to have only silent prayer for the first meeting—or two. Gradually, members of the group will feel moved to offer audible sentence prayers. In time, there will come more advanced expressions of prayer life. *No one should be put on the spot to pray aloud!*

The group experience should encourage free, spontaneous expression in an attitude of love and acceptance.

The leader of the group should give as little direction as is absolutely necessary. His main concerns will be:

—To keep the group flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

—To make sure that each person has an opportunity to share and/or ask questions.

—To keep the group moving in a unified and purposeful direction.

—To make no comments of criticism or judgments.

". . . Who Will Give Two Hours Time Each Week to Our Church."

A suggested list of general "church needs" is included for consideration and adaptation. A list of a church's local needs should be carefully prepared. Copies should be distributed so the participants can select their projects early in the month and relay their choices to the minister.

Each person will be on his own in following through on his commitment of time.

A Beginning List

(To be adapted and mimeographed for distribution at first group meeting.)

Please read over this beginning list of opportunities for service and choose the items that will challenge you most.

1. Visit hospital patients or shutins, representing the church.
2. Visit present members of the church to tell them about your experiences in The Great Experiment.
3. Visit families who are interested in our church and try to win them. (Names provided by the minister.)
4. Be a teacher or helper in a Sunday School Class for a month. (One hour for preparation as helper and one hour for class time.)
5. Join the choir for a month. (counts one hour per week.)
6. Visit in your "neighborhood" for one or two hours to find "prospects" for the church; talk with and invite them and report prospects to the minister.
7. Within your "neighborhood" spend an hour visiting two or three church families *whom you do not now know*, getting acquainted and talking to them about our church and its needs—spiritual and physical.
8. Visit with some new members of our church to get acquainted; to welcome them; and to tell them of your experience. (Two or three per hour—the minister will furnish names.)
9. Help provide Sunday School room improvements; iron and hang curtains in one or more rooms; fine-clean one of the rooms; construct and install shelving, cabinets, racks, etc.

10. Be a telephone committee of one (one hour per week).
    —Call United Methodist Women about monthly meeting or special projects.
    —Call for an hour, to encourage "inactive friends" to attend church.
    —Call members absent from a Sunday School class for past weeks.
11. Work out details for and promote the formation of a church library during the month.
12. Work in the church office (one or two hours)
    —General stenographic work
    —Transcribing from dictating machine
    —Work up current membership roster
    —Other as needed.
13. Work on the grounds of the church—a continuing need.
14. Visit in the homes of our visitors in church from the previous Sunday.
15. Use your imagination to discover other things the church needs you to do.

". . . Who Will Give God 1/10 of Earnings During This Month."

Each person must ultimately make the final decision on how to determine the amount of the tithe. Generally, one figures 1/10 of earnings after taxes. The best decision will ultimately be made on the basis of "Putting God first in the use of my money."

Each person is encouraged to take the tithe out first and pray about how to effectively spend the other 9/10 of income.

There are other causes to which one might generally wish to contribute, but for this month, all of the tithe should be given to God through the church.

It is not necessary to check on the response of people in their commitment to tithe. It is assumed that they will keep faith with their commitment.

". . . Who Will Spend 5:30-6:00 Each Morning in Prayer and Meditation."

It is extremely important that each person keep faith with the designated time for beginning prayer and meditation each morning. The half hour schedule should be followed precisely. There is great strength in corporate spiritual discipline. All who participate will be in this discipline together and each one must be responsible to his commitment.

Follow the suggested Scripture passages carefully. There is no "magic" in the verses or their order. They deal with personal faith and each must be considered.

A notebook will be necessary. During and after the month, one will find it interesting and inspirational to reread this spiritual diary. The notebook is a personal matter and should be responsibly kept. Nothing should be shared from it, except as one wishes to share. The notes are written for your own eyes, not for publication.

". . . Who Will Witness for God Their Experiences to Others."

No one should be pressured to witness! Every person should feel free to express his high moments and his low; convictions and doubts; fun-times and heartaches. All members of the prayer group should have the assurance that what he shares will not be taken outside the group.

It will be well to realize that one person's experience will not necessarily be meaningful to another. But each one should be free to share what is meaningful to him—and be accepted and loved.

Christian witnessing is a natural expression of what has happened to us when something has indeed, happened! But we cannot hold others responsible for "appreciating" our

personal experiences. In our desire to witness we must not invade another person's privacy. It is when they express interest that we do our most effective witnessing.

YOUTH AND THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

If there are enough youth and an available adult leader who is equipped to lead the group, The Great Experiment can be undertaken on the same basis as with adults, with one modification being considered: since many youth are not gainfully employed they designate an amount they would give in lieu of a tithe (some youth can tithe on their allowance; others find ways to make money to give). It is important for the youth to designate a specific amount and the means by which he will earn that amount, and record this data as a part of his commitment. This commitment should be updated or reaffirmed each week.

THE 633 CLUB

An alternate plan is a "youthful modification" of The Great Experiment, called "The 633 Club". The theme scripture for the group is Matthew 6:33—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you." The general theme for the group is the *Kingdom of God*—what is it? How do you find it? How do you recognize it? What do you do when you find it? How do you share it with others?

In the "633 Club" there are four notable alterations of the adult version of The Great Experiment. 1) As mentioned above youth are encouraged to state an amount of money they will earn to give in lieu of a tithe (for those who do not have an income upon which to tithe). 2) The time for morning study and meditation is 6:33 a.m. following the half-hour schedule of The Great Experiment. 3) The duration is for 21 days instead of one month. 4) Scripture

passages for the "633 Club" are especially selected from among the passages usually used by an adult group as follows:

SCRIPTURE READING FOR THE DAY
"The 633 Club"

Day of Month	Book	Chapter	Verse(s)
1	2 Chronicles	7	14
2	I John	3	22
3	St. John	15	6 and 7
4	St. Mark	11	24
5	Philippians	4	6
6	I John	5	14
7	Jeremiah	29	13
8	St. Matthew	6	7 thru 13
9	St. Matthew	18	19
10	St. Matthew	6	6
11	St. Luke	11	9 and 10
12	Psalms	127	1
13	Psalms	66	18
14	Isaiah	59	1 thru 3
15	Proverbs	28	9 and 10
16	St. Matthew	8	24 thru 27
17	St. John	6	47
18	Ecclesiastes	3	1 thru 8
19	Psalms	55	22
20	St. John	14	27
21	Psalms	1	1 thru 3

An emphasis may be placed upon memorization of certain selected passages of Scripture and memorization of the books of the Bible.

Adult leadership for a "633 Club" must be chosen with utmost care. Just any *interested* adult will not necessarily qualify. The adult must have some youth-oriented skills either learned or felt, and should know the language of youth, and have their confidence from the beginning.

The "633 Club" is an exciting discipline and well-suited for the temperament of youth. It can produce dramatic results rather quickly because most youth do not yet have as many hang-ups as most adults.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

It should be clearly understood that SURRENDER of one's life to God through Christ is the basic requirement for this spiritual discipline! Unless one feels a need to surrender and does surrender, The Great Experiment will largely miss its mark!

The presentation and interpretation of the challenge of The Great Experiment should be done in the spirit of love. Every person will not respond. Our freedom to decide is precious in the sight of God and we must honor that freedom in the spirit of love.

The challenge should be given to every adult alike. All should be invited to accept it within a reasonable time. When the preannounced deadline arrives, the group should be closed for the month. After the group is closed, anyone who becomes interested will be invited to join the next group.

Each group and each individual should be prepared for the "mountain top experience". This "wonderful feeling" comes when a person experiences conversion. Almost inevitably, it is followed by a "feeling" that is just opposite of the "mountain top experience." These high and low moments are natural and are to be expected. They will remind us that our surrender to God through Christ has been made because we love God—and not *just* for the "good feeling" we get! Surrender is an act of the will, not always an emotional experience.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Suitable books are invaluable in this month of spiritual discipline. We selected books on various levels, but the main emphasis was on first steps of spiritual life and growth. These three titles proved to be indispensable:

—W. E. Sangster, Teach Me to Pray (published by The Upper Room). 50c a copy.
Each person was given a copy at the second prayer group meeting. By that time, we were convinced we didnt know how to pray and this book helped answer our need.

—Ben C. Johnson, The Great Discovery (published by Lay Renewal Publications). 50c each.
This booklet was distributed near the third week of the month. By that time many of our group had begun to identify with the experiences related in the booklet, and it served a great need.

—Harvey Reeves Calkins, The Victory of Mary Christopher (reprinted jointly by Highland Park Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas, and the General Board of Lay Activities).
Every person was requested to read this book during the month of spiritual discipline. It deals in a helpful way with the Biblical references to tithing interwoven in a moving story. It is helpful and highly recommended.

These are Available by Ordering from
Tidings, 1908 Grand Ave., Nashville, Tennessee, 37203.
Include price plus 35c postage.

SUGGESTED BOOKS

Allen, Charles L. *God's Psychiatry, When the Heart Is Hungry*

American Bible Society, *Good News for Modern Man (Today's English Version of The New Testament)*

Bauman, Edward W. *Intercessory Prayer*

Bow, Russell. *Integrity of Church Membership*

Carruth, Thomas A. *One Hundred Days of Love, Total Prayer for Total Living*

Day, Albert E. *An Autobiography of Prayer, Discipline and Discovery*

Frankl, Victor. *Man's Search for Meaning*

Jones, E. Stanley. *Abundant Living, Conversion, How to Be a Transformed Person, The Way*

Kelly, Thomas. *Testament of Devotion*

Laubach, Frank. *Prayer—The Mightiest Force in the World*

Miller, Keith. *The Taste of New Wine, A Second Touch*

O'Conner, Elizabeth. *Call to Commitment*

Parker, William R. and Elaine St. John. *Prayer Can Change Your Life*

Phillips, J. B. *The New Testament in Modern English* (Student Edition), *Your God Is Too Small*

Raines, Robert A. *New Life in the Church, Reshaping the Christian Life*

Reid, Clyde. *The God Evaders*

Rinker, Rosalind. *Prayer—Conversing With God, You Can Witness With Confidence*

Sangster, W. E. *The Secret of Radiant Life*

St. Johns, Adela Rogers. *Tell No Man*

Stokes, Mack B. *Major Methodist Beliefs*

Shoemaker, Samuel M. *The Experiment of Faith, With the Holy Spirit and With Fire*

Smith, Hannah Whitall. *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*

Trueblood, Elton. *The Common Ventures of Life, The Company of the Committed, The Incendiary Fellowship*

Weatherhead, Leslie D. *The Will of God*

Wilkerson, David. *The Cross and the Switchblade*

COMMITMENT FORM
FOR ONE MONTH
WANTED: TEN BRAVE CHRISTIANS

1. Who will meet once each week to pray together.
2. Who will give two hours time each week to our church. (Self-surrender)
3. Who will give God 1/10 of earnings during this month. (self-denial)
4. Who will spend 5:30-6:00 each morning in prayer and meditation. (Self-control)
5. Who will witness for God their experience to others.

. . . . . .

(Please cut along this line)

I have read the above carefully and fully understand the implications of giving my life to God during the month (designated).

To prepare my life to receive from God the great strength and power available through prayer, I ask to be a member of this prayer group.

(Signed) _____

_____
Mailing Address

_____
Telephone No.

Please clip on dotted line above and mail to:
(The name and address of your group leader.)

MEDITATION SCHEDULE
SCHEDULE FOR MORNING PRAYER AND MEDITATION (Month)

5:30-5:40 Read scripture for the day (see schedule)—Pray and meditate on this scripture. Write out in less than 50 words how this passage of scripture applies to your life.

5:40-5:50 Write out one totally unselfish and unexpected act of kindness or generosity that you will do today. Name the person—then act, during the day, vigorously and with love and compassion. Keep a written record of the (1) reaction of the person toward whom the kindness is extended and (2) the effect of this act upon you personally.

5:50-6:00 Write out carefully how you would like to build and develop your life. Go into great detail if you desire. Take your time—Be thoughtful and prayerful. One well prayed out and thought out sentence per day would be excellent progress.

IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS

Let each of your prayers petition God for:

(1) A sense of divine direction for your life.
(2) An understanding of the need of total surrender to His will.
(3) Great strength of mind for the development of self-discipline.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Month

Day	*Book*	*Chapter*	*Verse(s)*
1	2 Chronicles	7	14
2	James	4	16
3	1 John	3	22
4	St. John	15	6 and 7
5	St. Mark	11	24
6	Philippians	4	6
7	1 John	5	14
8	Jeremiah	29	13
9	St. Matthew	6	7 thru 13
10	St. Matthew	18	19
11	Isaiah	65	23 and 24
12	St. Matthew	6	6
13	St. Luke	11	9 and 10
14	Isaiah	58	9 thru 11
15	Psalms	127	1
16	Psalms	66	18
17	Isaiah	59	1 thru 3
18	Proverbs	28	9 and 10
19	St. Matthew	8	24 thru 27
20	St. John	6	47
21	Ecclesiastes	3	1 thru 8
22	Psalms	55	22
23	St. John	14	27
24	Psalms	1	1 thru 3
25	St. John	14	1
26	St. Matthew	6	25 thru 33
27	Psalms	23	1 thru 6
28	St. Mark	12	30
29	Hebrews	12	1
30	St. John	4	14
31	St. Matthew	5	13 thru 16

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Second Month

Mental and spiritual qualities for building a peaceful, powerful, and productive life.

Day	*Qualities*	*Book*	*Chapter*	*Verse(s)*
1	Abiding in Christ	John	15	4-7
2	Access to God	John	14	6
3	Assurance	Hebrews	10	22
4	Love	John	13	12
5	Compassion	Luke	10	34
6	Consecration	Exodus	32	29
7	Courage	Joshua	1	7
8	Endurance	Matthew	10	32
9	Faith	2 Corinthians	5	7
10	Fidelity	Titus	2	10
11	Forgiveness	Ephesians	4	32
12	Fortitude	1 Corinthians	15	58
13	Generosity	Luke	6	38
14	Giving	Acts	20	35
15	Golden Rule	Matthew	7	12
16	Goodness	Luke	23	50
17	Gratitude	Colossians	2	7
18	Hope	Romans	5	5
19	Self-denial	Matthew	16	24
20	Steadfastness	Hebrews	12	1, 2
21	Virtue	Philippians	4	8
22	Charity	Corinthians	13	All Verses
23	Frugality	Genesis	41	35, 36
24	Happiness	Luke	6	23
25	Perseverance	1 Corinthians	15	58
26	Purpose	Luke	9	51
27	Reason	Proverbs	26	16
28	Self-Control	Proverbs	16	32
29	Self-Respect	1 Timothy	4	16
30	Thrift	1 Corinthians	16	2
31	Wisdom	Proverbs	3	13

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Third Month

LOVE

Day	*Book*	*Chapter*	*Verse(s)*
1	1 John	4	8
2	Mark	12	32-34
3	1 Timothy	6	10-12
4	Proverbs	10	12
5	Matthew	5	46-47
6	1 John	2	15
7	1 John	4	18-21
8	Romans	10	13
9	1 John	5	14-15
10	St. John	15	17
11	Romans	8	35-39
12	Ephesians	3	19
13	St. John	15	12
14	1 John	4	7
15	Deuteronomy	6	5-7
16	Micah	6	8
17	1 John	4	10
18	Matthews	22	37-40
19	St. John	14	15
20	St. John	14	18

PRAYER

21	Philippians	4	6
22	Jeremiah	29	13
23	St. John	9	31
24	James	5	16
25	1 John	3	22
26	St. John	15	6-7
27	Isaiah	65	23-24
28	Isaiah	58	9
29	Jeremiah	33	3
30	1 Kings	3	11-14

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Fourth Month

ACTS IN THIRTY DAYS

(Good News For Modern Man)*

Day	*Scripture*	*Subject*
1	1: 1- 1:26	Dear Theophilus
2	2: 1- 2:47	The Coming of the Holy Spirit
3	3: 1- 4:22	The Lame Man Healed
4	4:23- 4:37	The Believers Pray for Boldness
5	5: 1- 5:42	Ananias and Sapphira
6	6: 1- 6: 7	The Seven Helpers
7	6: 8- 7:53	The Arrest of Stephen
8	7:54- 7:60	The Stoning of Stephen
9	8: 1- 8:40	Saul Persecutes the Church
10	9: 1- 9:31	The Conversion of Saul
11	9:32-10:33	Peter in Lydda and Joppa
12	10:34-10:48	Peter's Speech
13	11: 1-11:30	Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem
14	12: 1-12:25	More Persecution
15	13: 1-13:52	Barnabas and Saul Chosen and Sent
16	14: 1-14:28	In Iconium
17	15: 1-15:35	The Meeting at Jerusalem
18	15:36-16:10	Paul and Barnabas Separate
19	16:11-16:40	In Philippi: The Conversion of Lydia
20	17: 1-17:34	In Thessalonica
21	18: 1-18:23	In Corinth
22	18:24-19:20	Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth
23	19:21-20: 6	The Riot in Ephesus
24	20: 7-21:16	Paul's Last Visit in Troas
25	21:17-23:11	Paul Visits James
26	23:12-24:27	The Plot Against Paul's Life
27	25: 1-26:32	Paul Appeals to the Emperor
28	27: 1-27:44	Paul Sails for Rome
29	28: 1-28:15	In Malta
30	28:16-28:31	In Rome

***(Good News For Modern Man is Today's English Version of The New Testament, and may be ordered from The American Bible Society, New York.)**

SELF-EVALUATION
A LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERS

[Look back over your notes for precise details in making your personal evaluation at the end of the first month. This will help you determine whether you have been fair to yourself and the The Experiment.]

I have followed exactly the half-hour schedule. ____YES ____NO

I have failed to keep my 5:30 A.M. appointment how many mornings? _____

I have missed doing the Experiment how many days? _____

I have accomplished ¾ of my good deeds. ____YES ____NO

I have given my 10%. ____YES ____NO

I have prayed about my use of the other 90% of my income. ____YES ____NO

I have read the three booklets, *Teach Me To Pray, The Great Discovery,* and *The Victory of Mary Christopher.* ____YES ____NO

I have been genuinely open with the group. ____YES ____NO

I am gaining insight into my life through the daily Scriptures. ____YES ____NO

I look for opportunities to talk to people about God. ____YES ____NO

How many days has it been since I talked with someone specifically about God? _____

How many hours am I behind in my "2 hours a week?" _____

How many meetings have I missed? _____

Have I surrendered my life to God? ____YES ____NO

FOLLOWING YOUR THOUGHTFUL AND CANDID EVALUATION . . . STRIKE THROUGH THE PHRASES OF THIS PRAYER WHICH DO NOT APPLY TO YOU.

"O God, as I come to the close of The Great Experiment, I [feel great] [am sorry] about my faithfulness to you. I have [sincerely] [half-heartedly] tried to put you first in my life. I have [surrendered] [drawn closer] to Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord. Right now I commit myself to you completely [for the first time] [again]. And before this day is over, I will tell [one person] [two or more persons] of my new commitment.

Signed _____

Date _____

AMEN"

THE FIVE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

of

THE JOHN WESLEY GREAT EXPERIMENT

"WANTED: TEN BRAVE CHRISTIANS"
who for one month

1. Will meet once each week to pray together
2. Will give two hours' time each week to God
3. Will give God 1/10th of their earnings
4. Will spend from 5:30 to 6:00 each morning in prayer and meditation
5. Will witness for God their experience to others

Bishop Mack B. Stokes says of this program: "I do not think we ever want to repudiate the great New Testament teaching that we are forgiven and brought into right relationship to God through Christ by faith. That is to say, by opening our hearts to Him and putting our absolute trust in Him for His forgiving grace. But this process, in order to be implemented properly, must involve certain disciplines and sacrifices, and that is the truth which is at the center of this experience."

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